

# THE ARGOSY.

JULY, 1886.

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## LADY VALERIA.

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### CHAPTER XXIV.

#### A DAY OF STRANGE MEETINGS.

EDRIC walked silently beside Elsie as the chairman moved on again, waiting in some wonder for her next words. They did not come at once; the red spot died out of her cheeks and she began to glance up at him in her old frightened way. Perhaps there were too many listeners about for her to speak freely. The chairman guided her to a sheltered turn under the cliff where only a few invalids were sunning themselves on a distant bench.

"You have come down to see your brother, I suppose?" Edric asked at length.

"Yes, a kind friend offered to bring me here. I had never seen the sea before in my life," she answered, in the little breathless, disjointed way that she always fell into when addressing him.

"And what do you think of it?"

Elsie's eyes turned to the wide, flashing, foam-flecked expanse below them, but only for a second. "I have hardly dared to look at it. It frightens me, and I cannot sleep for listening to it. Besides—I have been so afraid of missing you—if you happened to be here——"

The slightest shade of disapproval crossed Edric's face, and his answer was not promptly forthcoming. Elsie felt the cloud and hurried to explain.

"I wanted to thank you again for your kindness to us all, and—and—I had something rather important to say."

"Wants to get her brother back again, I suppose," flashed through Edric's mind, but he only looked attention.

"I don't know how you may take it, sir, but I can't help it if you are angry. I must run the risk of that. You may guess how serious it is when I *can* risk displeasing you," she ended, impulsively.

"I am sure you can only mean well whatever you do. I am not

likely to be offended, I think," replied Edric, smiling kindly, touched as he always was by the soft, frightened manner and great pleading eyes, like those of some graceful wild creature that would come for a caress if it dared, shrinking and alluring, following and yet alert to fly if approached.

"You are sure? Not if I seem dreadfully impertinent and interfering?"

"Wants me to get Sampson made a corporal forthwith," decided he.

"Oh, Mr. Poynter, if you would only do what I ask you and go away!" was the unexpected sequel.

"Go away? Now? Oh, certainly. I beg your pardon for detaining you, but I understood you had something to say to me."

"Away from here. From the camp. From your regiment, I mean. Not for long, but till it is safe for you to return. I can't explain. I know how strange it must sound to you, but indeed, *indeed* I must ask it. What *can* I say to make you listen?"

She was in earnest, honest earnest, none but the most dense could have failed to see that. She was terrified out of her shyness and desperate at the want of sympathy in his face. He looked merely stern and perplexed, hardly curious.

The chairman had left them at a sign from her; the invalids had started on a stroll; they were alone together. She caught his hand in her tremulous hot fingers and held it in an eager beseeching clasp.

"Don't, *don't* go away without hearing me! I am telling the truth. There is mischief about. I cannot tell you how, but—save yourself! Oh, it is such a little thing I ask! A few days—just what you would give to some pleasure trip—and it is for your life—your life!"

She was sobbing now in an agony of impatience at his silence, and Edric, horribly bothered as he was, could not deal as severely and sensibly with her as the model young man with his wits and his principles always at hand and in good working order should have done. He, it is to be regretted, thought first of consoling the poor silly little girl, and then of the consequences.

"Don't cry," and he patted her shoulder affectionately with his spare hand. "Why, what can it matter to you what becomes of me next week or the week after? You dear, kind, ridiculous little woman! Now look up and tell me all about it. Why am I in greater danger than anyone else? than your brother, for instance?"

"I can't explain!" she cried, despairingly. "I knew how it would be. You are very good to listen to me at all, but I can tell you nothing more."

"Well, it doesn't matter, for as it happens I can't go. I *would* have gone—I really would, and asked no questions—if it would have made you happy," said the inconsiderate youth, "but I can't. It is a question of duty. I could not shirk *that*, Elsie, at a mere hint of danger."

"But it's your life—your *life* you risk in staying here——"

"That is no concern of mine. It's Her Majesty's property. Don't you know I'm going to be shot at in Egypt for six-and-eightpence a day, and I dare say shall come home safe and sound after all?"

It was rather a dreary pleantry, but his mind was running on Euphrosyne's threat—or warning—taken in connection with Elsie's wild errand. What relation, he thought with sudden intuition, might not the one bear to the other? He would make it his business to find that out at once.

She had released his hand with a shudder when he spoke of Egypt. He guided the chair to a bench, and seating himself so as to bring himself more on a level with the pretty, woe-begone eyes that looked disconsolately at him, began impressively and authoritatively:

"Now listen to me, Elsie. I know you are expecting me to try and find out what made you think of coming to me with such an unreasonable request. It was not the sort of thing that would have occurred to you to do of your own idea, I am sure." She gave him a quick deprecating look and flushed hotly. He took her trembling fingers in his to reassure her and went on. "I know all about it. Yes, I do, quite well." He felt the fingers give a great twitch, and Elsie's eyes turned on him in dismay. "I know who sent you. There is only one person in the world who has the slightest interest in getting me out of this. I don't know her reason; no good one I'm convinced, but it's a strong one. Now I suspect it was this mutual friend of ours who has sent you here. Eh! Elsie? Don't you know her? A dark woman——" Here he stopped with an ill-timed fit of caution on the very verge of a description that Elsie must infallibly have recognised. "No; you describe your friend first."

"You are wrong! Altogether wrong!" declared Elsie, wide-eyed and emphatic. "No one has told me anything. No one."

"Then how did you come by the notion?" he persisted.

She drooped her head, murmured something confusedly, sighed, looked up piteously in his face. "If you *would* but believe me——"

"Let's make a bargain. You give me a reasonable explanation of all this, and I'll make one more attempt to get leave, though I warn you I shan't succeed. If you won't speak, there's an end of the matter."

"But I can't, there's where it is," she whispered, aggravatingly.

"Very good. There's an end of it, you see. Good-bye. I shall call your man now."

"Wait, wait! Oh dear, what shall I do? It's no use telling you—but if it's the only chance—I don't care if you laugh—if it only makes you mind," she went on disconnectedly. "It was a dream I had—only a dream," and she forced a laugh.

"Only a dream?" he echoed in kindly mockery.

"It was one night when I had been sitting up for father, I was

very tired and thought I should sleep directly, and so I did, but oh! the pain and weariness of such sleep. It was crowded with fragments of visions that I tried again and again to see clearly, and yet dreaded to see, for I knew they were terrible, every one. Black, rolling clouds full of dreadful shapes came closing in on me, and I was fighting them off with all my might when someone behind me called 'Open, and let the secret be made plain to her.' Then another voice replied 'What will befall is written—is written.' Then the clouds parted, and I saw before me the days of the weeks to come, one after the other sliding along like great globes of luminous light or rings of shining smoke with figures stirring in them. I could see myself looking out of every one, and other faces that I knew, and I counted till I came to to-day, and then I saw you."

"Not unlikely. You knew which day you were coming to Folkestone and were thinking about it."

She shook her head. "I had seen you in all the others, not as you look now, but in a red coat, or a dark blue one with braid, and gold on your cap. To-day you were standing looking as you did that night——"

"Quite right. I shall wear mufti to-night. I am going to dine at the West Cliff with some people," he annotated. She shivered.

"And then over you fell a great black cloud—a pall. I knew it was, and it sank and hid you. Day after day passed and I looked for you, and still came only blackness, till seven days had gone, and then all else melted away and you were lying with a white sheet over you, and when I lifted it your dead eyes stared up at me, and through all was the sound of the sea!"

Her voice sank to a whisper of horror, her face grew as ghastly white as the vision that still held her imagination. Edric felt uncomfortable, though unbelieving.

"It's a coincidence," he said, "an unpleasant coincidence, that you and somebody else should have pitched upon this week as a bad time for me. Well, we can't tell what may be the worth of your warning till the week's over, can we? And then it won't be much use. Perhaps it means a wedding? Dreams go by contraries, you know. Was that all?"

Elsie shook her head.

"It came again," she went on, in the same low, awe-stricken tone; "the same again, and the third time I could bear it no longer and struggled with the shapes, and beat and crushed them with my hands, and fought till they rolled down before me in a glittering downfall of fragments. And I was holding one that suddenly grew warm and clasped my hand in return, and—and——" She stopped, then with an odd mixture of confusion and determination in her pretty face went on boldly: "It was *your* hand, just as you hold mine now. I saw it as plainly as I do now, and I dropped it——" here the parallel was



not complete—"and I felt it was a sign given to me that I might save you—if you *will* be saved!" And both Elsie's hands were laid imploringly on his.

"It isn't shown very clearly how you are to do it though. Suppose you have already done so without being aware of it? If I hadn't been gossiping here with you I might have come to grief up there perhaps. Slipped over the cliff, got bitten by a mad dog, lost my heart to some fair-haired fiend who would be the death of me in the third volume." Edric stopped to laugh, looking so cheery and confident and handsome that Elsie smiled too, a misty, tearful smile. "I'm not laughing at your visions. It was as right for you to act upon them as for me to disregard them, but that's all we can do. How long do you stay here?"

"Only till to-morrow," with a regretful sigh. Edric sighed too—with relief.

"Then we shan't meet again? So good-bye. Now *don't* begin to cry again, like a dear girl!"

She smiled obediently, looking so penitent and alarmed at his tone of vexation that he could but lift the little hand to his soft moustache. "I'll come and see you. I will indeed. Just to show you I'm all right."

"When?"

"Oh, I can't promise. Not for a week or so—let the dream have a chance of coming true."

"In a fortnight?"

"Yes, if it will make you happy. Good-bye, good-bye."

The bath-chairman was hanging over the railings in converse with a friend, well-content at the easy fashion in which his hourly wage was being earned. Edric sent him back to his duty, and was well-pleased to see that the little group of officers had scattered and that he had no questioning to fear on the subject of his prolonged interview.

He took a turn or two up and down the Lees, looked in at the club, went to three afternoon teas and back to Camp. He was devoured by an odd, restless wish that the day should come to an end. He wanted to get a night's sleep over before he began to think over its experiences. The dinner at the West Cliff seemed intolerably slow, the conversation unendurably heavy. There was an open-air concert in the hotel gardens. Some of the party strolled out to listen, and he among the number. But once there, the idea of spending another hour in the company of the people he had been meeting and talking to over and over again since mid-day grew too insupportable to be entertained, and with an abrupt farewell he departed.

He walked aimlessly down the town to the harbour and up again to the Lees. People were everywhere that night, out under the white glare of the broad July moon. On the pier, on the beach, on the Lees above,

all the place seemed alive with sauntering, chattering figures and their jet-black shadows. The windows of the houses facing the sea were mostly open, the gas inside looking faint and dim in the strong white brilliance. The distant sound of the music rose and fell like the surge of the sea, hardly more audible through the voices of the throng.

Edric leant against the railings idly watching, wondering whether it was anything in the full white light that fed the disquiet in his blood, whether a hard walk to Dover, a swim in the early grey dawn, and a tramp home in time for the start to the ranges mightn't be the surest sedative. A tall lady in old-fashioned, clinging skirts and huge, full sleeves, with a stupendous hat bowed under the weight of a forest of nodding plumes had stopped just in front of him. A pair of glasses glinted weirdly in the moonbeams from under the shadow of her hat brim. She looked up and down and around him, and at last got the glasses levelled full at him, and then advanced with a precipitous rush.

"You are Mr. Poynter from the Camp, aren't you? You don't know me, I think. I'm Lady Charles Brant, and I want to know if you will mind coming to see mamma for a few moments. She recognised you just now and sent me."

"With pleasure." Edric raised himself and lifted his hat. "Do I know your mother?"

"I don't know, I'm sure. I suppose so. She is Lady Valeria Meynell."

## CHAPTER XXV.

"FOR NE'ER WAS DREAM SO LIKE A WAKING."

"I DON'T think she *does* know you, either," Lady Charles went on, peering up at him, "for she asked me your name when we saw you pass this afternoon. Of course I ought to have known it, but then I couldn't tell it was *you*, or anybody else at that distance. It was confusing, wasn't it? She recognised you without knowing you, and I knew you and didn't recognise you, and we had to ask the landlord at last."

Edric had succeeded in recalling the occasion of his meeting Lady Charles. "You were at Mrs. Damien's, I think."

"The evening we did the septett! Of course. Would you believe it, we have never been able to get that up again!"

"What a pity!" (devoutly hoping she might not enquire if he knew "the septett" again when he heard it). "I have one of the performers in my company now, young Paramount. He enlisted the week after."

"What a sinful shame! Or no, perhaps it's lucky. You can send him down here now and then to practise. Won't you please order

him to come? We are doing the Mozart quintet now. The *Mozart!*" and her eyes gleamed through her glasses.

"Quite impossible, I'm afraid." Here to his relief they stopped at a large, handsome house, in the window of which sat a lady shrouded in a black lace shawl. She drew back hastily as they approached.

The room in which she sat was half lighted by a dim lamp, the only light by the time Edric entered, as she had hastily dropped a curtain shutting out the window and the moon-beams, and stood in the gloom to receive him: a tall, shadowy figure holding out a thin white hand.

"Thank you, Mabel; you may go," she said, in a soft, imperious tone, and the door shut behind Edric, who advanced in some embarrassment. Her hand closed on his with a clasp that made him shudder, the thin, shrivelled fingers burned and throbbed and clutched at his with such greedy haste, and her great sparkling eyes shone on him with such fierce enquiry.

Then he knew her, and stood on guard, expectant, mistrustful. She held him at arm's length without a word, gazing and gazing. Then a shivering sigh broke from her lips and she dropped her face in her hands. "So like and yet so unlike!" he heard her moan.

"Do you know why I sent for you?" she asked, looking up suddenly. "Did you never have any fancy about me? Oh, look at me. Look me in my face well. Tell me, have you never seen it before? Never in your dreams, long, long ago?"

She stepped forward to the table where the lamp stood, and lifting it, let its light fall full on her worn, majestic features, her deep, woeful eyes and quivering lips.

"I have seen you before," he began, hesitatingly, but it was not the answer she looked for. Her face clouded with bitter disappointment. She put down the lamp sharply.

"No, I could not expect it. Never mind. I have much more to say to you, and must lose no more time. I have so little, so little left to me now!"

She sat down on a sofa near and held out her hand to him, drawing him down beside her. He was utterly bewildered and filled with mistrust, and yet at the same time with deepest pity, and touched by the odd lingering tenderness of her voice and gaze. Something of this he must have shown ever so slightly, for a half smile dawned on her lips, the distressed lines of her brow relaxed, and she sighed again, this time in content as she sat still holding his hand.

"Would you stay with me," she said, gently, "if I were to ask you? Would you come and be a son to a poor, dying old woman, who has only been living on and on to meet you once more? I would make your life happy if money can do it. I would ask nothing in return, *nothing*. A kind word now and then and the sight of your face—will you give me so much?"

"Dear Lady Valeria, you cannot be in earnest. It's awfully good of you, but if I wished it ever so much I couldn't give myself away in that fashion, you know. I must stick to my profession, for one thing; and besides——"

"What is there besides," she asked, in a sharp, clear tone. "Are you afraid I shall not make my promises good?"

"Besides, I don't exactly understand what you want me to do. I couldn't take money from you. It wouldn't seem at all a right thing to do—for me or for any man."

"It would be right if I wished it. I would give you my whole fortune in exchange for your love."

"There's where it is," demurred Edric, strong in his convictions, weak in his expression of them. "I should feel you were being swindled, if I were to pretend to accept your offer. Why, we are strangers, you and I, we know nothing of one another. I have been fancying that perhaps I am like someone you cared for once upon a time." She clutched his hand tighter, and he felt the trembling that seized her, and heard her breath catch with a sob. "Tell me anything else I can do to please you," he said, kindly, "and I'll do it, but you mustn't talk of money again."

She looked up at him in mute supplication, studying his kind, perplexed young face with her dark, yearning eyes, driving back the sobs and words that seemed ready to break from her lips, holding his hand still in a clasp that seemed as if it would never slacken.

"You will take nothing from me—nothing. Not my love? And you will give me nothing. Not a word of kindness, not a kiss. Oh, my boy, my boy! The sorrow falls, as he said it would, where the guilt lies. I must bear it to my grave, but you—you are happy? Prosperous? You have never known the want of love and care in your life?" She looked greedily for his assent at each pause. "That is justice—Heaven's justice. What am I that I should beg its mercy?"

She turned from Edric as she spoke, and he rose, loth to leave her, yet uncertain how far it was wise to prolong this strange scene. She rose too, calm now by comparison, her eyelids drooping wearily, her beautiful old lips curved piteously.

"You want to leave me now?" she asked, looking so wistful, so forlorn and shaken, that Edric's heart ached as he answered her.

"It is late. I have some way to go," and he involuntarily stretched out his arms fearing she would faint and fall. She sank into them and rested there lightly, her eyes closed, her lips very white. He kissed her forehead softly, once—twice. "Jack!" she whispered, and a smile flickered over her face. She raised her head and looked at him, still smiling. "I shall die now," she said, softly. "I have hoped and prayed for death for so long in vain, but now I feel the promise of its coming. You will not be sorry you have held me near your heart and kissed me, some day—when I am dead."

She disengaged herself gently and glided like a shadow away across the room and back to within the circle of lamplight almost immediately.

"I came here to find you. I knew we should meet, and I brought this with me to give you. Do not open this letter. It is for my son Oliver; you are to take it to him when you hear I am dead. This is for you. Wear it when you give the letter and always after. It will be yours by right." She opened a worn little red-leather case, and Edric glanced at a handsome signet ring inside for a second. "Do not look at it again till you put it on your finger for good. There; take them and bid me farewell."

Edric looked at the letter and case with strong repugnance, and made no movement to accept them. "May I not leave them here? Can you give them to your son to keep till—till—the proper time? I would rather not have charge of them."

"No, no, no," she repeated, more and more imperatively. "You must give the letter yourself—*yourself*, mind. No messenger will do. And it must be given unopened, mind that. Oliver is an honest, upright man, and will do his duty. I can trust him. He will understand how much I have spared him. I was not always willing to do so. There were times when I felt I must speak or go mad. I *did* speak once. You will find inside this the name of someone who knows my story. Someone that I once felt could have helped me. Go to him and ask him what I told him once, and tell him I have obeyed him. I have hated him—I could not bear to see him again ever since, but I have obeyed him. "Silence. Silence to the end," he said. "Go to him, but promise me, not till I am dead."

"I promise, though indeed the more you say to me the more I am sure you are making some terrible mistake. I'll keep your ring and your letter, and I'll ask no questions; that's what I have got to do, isn't it?"

Edric was beginning to feel the inevitable reaction from the long-strained excitement of the scene, the necessity for saying something brutally out-spoken, if need be, to put an end to this bewildering entanglement of half-confidences, but he was spared the necessity.

There was a sound of carriage-wheels outside, a ring at the bell, voices in the hall. She held up her hand for him to listen.

"That is my son Oliver's voice. Come, you shall meet him, that you may know him and that he may know you."

She beckoned him to the door of the room and flung it open, standing side by side with Edric, in the full light of the hall, her hand laid on his arm.

Lady Charles Brant was outside, standing on the lowest step of the staircase, her head tossed back indignantly, with an air of being called to account for something, and resenting it. A gentleman in travelling garb was speaking frowningly to her, but he stopped abruptly as the door opened, and turned round curiously.

Edric felt angry and awkward, and determined to bring the situation to a close at once. Without waiting for an introduction to Mr. Meynell, he crossed to Lady Charles and bade her good-night, and then returned to Lady Valeria.

"Good-bye. Do you really insist on my taking this?" He held out the letter and case, but she drew back and he had no choice but to retain them. Her hand touched his for the last time. It was chill as death. Her lips moved without sound. She bowed her head stiffly. Then he right willingly crossed the threshold into the free air once more.

The moon was sinking into a hazy bank of clouds, and the loiterers on the Lees were fast dispersing as he started off towards Shorncliffe at his best pace, feeling somewhat as if he had been dreaming some dream a hundred years long, and that it was about time to wake up and make an end of it.

It was becoming oppressive. His head ached with confused memories. Elsie's warnings, Lady Valeria's strange, passionate words, what did they both mean? Where should he find the explanation, and the link between them that he dimly felt existed?

*Euphrosyne!* Someone had surely spoken the name close at his ear, so distinctly it fell on his sense.

Euphrosyne. That was the answer. Despite Elsie's disavowal, it was she who had sent her he believed. It was she who knew he would meet Lady Valeria and desired to prevent it. Why? What did it all mean, this blindfold game of fast and loose? He was getting too weary to think. He was of a straightforward, unimaginative nature. The mystery and romance of the situation had no charms for him, while he felt the burden of doubt and secrecy to be physically exhausting almost.

How long the winding white road seemed in that faint light. How still and how lonely. He wished he had had the sense to go back to the hotel and drive home with Carroll. He must walk more, though, for the future. He was getting out of condition. Nervous, too; or why should he be hag-ridden by the recollection of that inscrutable figure with its wicked eyes gleaming at him out of the white face. Why should he keep fancying that he had seen it quite lately—that he had passed her while he was too busy listening to Lady Charles to recognise her, and his perceptions only retained a dim echo of the impression?

If she were to appear now! To rise suddenly from the shadow of that hedge, black against the white ground, her dusky finger pointed straight at the secret concealed in his breast. He involuntarily stopped to make sure of the safety of his charge, and pressed onwards and upwards more rapidly.

Out on the hill top at last, where Shorncliffe lay silent and sleeping under the dying moonlight. There were the garrison police on their rounds. He looked at them with quite a novel respect and sense of



security. There were lights still in the Royal Denbigh's mess, sounds of voices and glimpses of scarlet and gold figures picturesquely embowered in Dalyell's cherished vegetation, with tobacco vapour enough to cause the last of the Aphides to give up the ghost incontinently.

Edric paused before going on to his hut, but weariness and a dread of question and remark carried the point, and he went his way to his own quarters. Dalyell, who occupied the other half of the hut, was manifestly still absent, and Edric hesitated to enter. The flapping white blind in Dalyell's open window startled him. The passage between the rooms looked dark and like a pitfall: though he knew well that by daylight there was nothing worse to be seen there than his own spare table and a furniture case or two. It was his nerves he told himself that were all unstrung and playing him tricks. What else could persuade him that a dark figure drew back further into the dark, and that he had seen a hand rest for a second on the edge of that table just as he struck a cigar-light and looked about him.

He let himself into his room and lighted the candles, all of them, and his reading-lamp as well. Then he searched the place thoroughly, half-ashamed of himself as he did so. Everything was exactly as he was accustomed to find it. Then he set about discovering the safest place of deposit for his letter and ring. His chest of drawers had an arrangement for writing; a desk that pulled out and closed with a patent lock. He cleared it of everything and placed Lady Valeria's deposit therein, then locked it securely.

"Suppose I lose that key, or let it get stolen!" he thought; "and someone else gets hold of it. I know what I'll do, I'll sink it in the sea—or better, get a hammer and smash it to-morrow, and whenever the letter is wanted I'll burst the drawer open."

He put it under his pillow, and, with a feeling of being rather ridiculous, took his revolver from its case, examined and loaded it carefully and placed it within reach of his hand, and making a rapid operation of undressing, at last plunged into bed in search of the restful, dreamless sleep he was longing for.

It would not come. Weary as his tired eyes were, they refused to close. What prevented them? Why should he keep counting the folds into which that curtain fell between his room and the next? Why should he fancy that ever and again the edge drew softly aside as if someone were about to enter and then retreated. Why, it was too dark to make out anything except the forms that he knew by heart; his coat and cap on a hook, on the opposite wall, sword and belt on another, uniform neatly brushed and folded on the chair beneath, and on the other side of the doorway the oak-framed photograph of the Cathedral and the smaller one of the Deanery, his old home, below it. That was all, for the light he had left burning out on the dressing-table had gutted down and was spluttering to its evil-smelling end. He watched the sparks lazily, too lazily to get up and extinguish them, or light another candle—watched them till they

changed to fiery stars like Elsie's dream and rolled away into darkness, "leaving me lying here, just as she said," he murmured, drowsily. One was left. No. From a spark it had grown into the lighthouse on the end of the pier, and the waves were rising with a soft surge and rustle that filled the room. He would throw the key in now; but do what he would it floated, always just out of reach of his hand. Iron *did* float. He was in the midst of a hot argument with Dalyell on the subject when he found himself awake saying conclusively: "What about Ironclads?" and laughed aloud. Dalyell's musk could it have been that he had been dreaming of, or the scent—the evil, sickly-sweet scent—that still clung to his fingers? Was it this morning? He had closed his eyes again, indignant with himself for awaking. From the dark there shone out on him a thousand silver stars in an instant—they were the glinting of Lady Charles's glasses—they were eyes—shining eyes—every one of them, and Euphrosyne's! It was her heavy black mantle, not the darkness that lay across his face and was smothering him. He *would* wake. He *must*! He gave a struggle and a choking cry, and that moment sank off fast and sound in blissful unconsciousness. The black robe drifted away into the soft, dark, swelling tide, a strong grip held him up as he was borne along. He would be cast up on the sands soon—at Hester's feet—and here sleep came in good earnest.

## CHAPTER XXVI.

### HOW EDRIC CAME TO SEAGRAVE PLACE.

SEASON in, season out, Seagrave Place wore the same aspect of gloomy seclusion. No coquetteries of floral balcony decoration ever could brighten it in summer, so no shut up windows and neglected door-steps could add a shade to its gloom in winter. So profound its solemn quiet that the knock of an ordinary caller seemed to reverberate from end to end, and made the one solitary passer-by look up to see who had delivered it.

The passer-by was Eustace Stannard, the house that he involuntarily turned to look at was Lady Valeria Meynell's, and the visitor waiting on the steps was, as he recognised directly, "Mrs. Damien's friend, who followed her to St. Fridolin's that day. Poor fellow, how wretchedly ill he looks. I wonder if he has had any news of her."

Edric likewise recognised "the Vicar, that good-looking fellow," and returned his hasty greeting. His mind was too full of his own affairs to have energy left to detest the sight of him, as he had done on their first meeting. He had hardly room for a passing thought of Mrs. Damien just then. Then the door opened.

"Not at home," pronounced the butler, decisively, before the first words of his enquiry had passed his lips.

"I have come on very important business, and I think if you take

my card to your mistress she will see me directly," said Edric, ignoring the social fiction.

"It is of no use, sir. My lady won't see anybody." The man looked injured, as if he had just been going over all the ground before that day.

"She has returned from Folkestone, I know," Edric persisted, wondering if a sovereign would clear the way for him. The butler read his thoughts, but he had a conscience.

"I really can't help it, sir," he said, deprecatingly. "My lady is very ill and can on no account be disturbed. I'm sure I'd gladly do anything in *my* power," he added, in the forlorn hope that Edric might possibly take the will for the deed.

"Can I see Mr. Meynell?" after a moment's pondering.

"I don't know, sir. You'd better enquire in the City," making a sudden desperate attempt to rid himself of the pertinacious intruder as a gentleman emerged from the gloom of the hall within.

He bestowed a withering glance on the butler, who stood aside resigned to fate, and advanced with a look of sour dignity to dispossess himself of Edric, who held obstinate possession of the door-mat.

"Lady Valeria Meynell is quite unequal to receiving visitors to-day," he announced, stiffly, giving no invitation to enter.

"Can you tell me *when* she will be able to see me? It is on a very serious matter that I have to speak to her," Edric asked, recognising the gentleman he had met at Folkestone ("my son Oliver," she had called him). Mr. Meynell recognised him too, and with no friendly sentiments.

"I am sorry to say I cannot," he replied, stiffly.

"I should like to send her a note or message—if I knew what to say."

The butler disappeared at a sign from his master, who stood grimly and discouragingly attentive while Edric extracted a pencil and began a few words on the back of his card, crossed them out, looked blankly at the banker, tried again and gave it up.

"I don't quite see how to put it. Perhaps I had better get *you* to give a message. Lady Valeria asked me to do something for her, and I can't; that's all. If she will see me I'll explain why."

The look on Mr. Meynell's face of suspicious disfavour grew darker, but he only bowed gravely.

"You'll be sure to give it?" Edric asked, as he moved off.

Mr. Meynell's mouth twitched impatiently. "I—ah—I must beg that you will leave it to my discretion. I cannot promise."

"But it's serious. It's *uncommonly* serious. If you won't promise I shall have to get her told some other way. Of course if she's too ill—but that makes it all the more serious."

"I think you may trust me to do the best I can for my mother," Mr. Meynell spoke in grave rebuke. "Good-day."

"Good afternoon," responded Edric, rather sheepishly. "Of course you'll choose the best opportunity. And you'll write to me, won't you?" The heavy door closed softly on him, and without further answer he departed.

Mr. Meynell picked up from the floor the card on which Edric had begun his futile pencillings and, tearing it to bits, dropped it into his waste-paper basket; unconscious that the offending butler had not only received a previous one from Edric, but had been incautious enough to leave it on the great bronze card tray: where Lady Valeria's maid, peering idly about half-an-hour later, espied it, wondered at it, and ended by carrying it up with the next delivery of letters to her mistress's room.

Edric was too much absorbed in considering what he had better have said or left unsaid to notice that Mr. Stannard, returning from his errand or visit, was hastening to meet him, till they met face to face.

Something in Edric's harassed, dejected air struck Eustace even more forcibly on a nearer view. "You have been to the Meynells, I see; can you tell me anything of Lady Valeria?"

"She's ill; too ill to see anyone, so they say. She didn't seem so bad when I saw her at Folkestone not a week ago——" then he checked himself abruptly. "Are you a friend of hers?" he looked up at the Vicar with a sudden idea. "Do you think *you* could get to see her? I've a fancy that it is Mr. Meynell's doing that I'm not admitted."

"I can try. I think I ought to do so."

"Then would you mind saying to her that you saw me here."

"That I saw you here? Is that all?" looking slightly surprised.

"And that she can ask her son what I came for. That will do the business, I fancy."

Eustace accepted the mysterious commission without further enquiry, and they parted.

"It was a chance," Edric said to himself. "I'm glad I took it. If she's really bad, I musn't write agitating letters, and I daren't speak out to her son; not just yet. Well, I've done all I know, though bad's the best! And now—*now* I'll be off and put the case from beginning to end before Miss Archdale before I'm an hour older!"

It was a curious fact that though from the first day of his meeting with Euphrosyne he had been possessed with such a dread of being made a sort of link between her and Mrs. Damien as to make him almost fear to think of one in the other's presence, he had no such misgivings on Hester's behalf. Now, with Euphrosyne drawing her magic circles closer and closer round him, his love seemed to be a thing to hide away fathoms deep, as men bury their treasure at the coming of an enemy, to be drawn forth bright and precious as ever

when the troublous times are over. But as for Hester, his faith in her was strong against the wickedest witch that ever wove a spell. She was perfectly able to take care of herself and, on a pinch, of him too.

There was a sense of security, a promise of help and enlightenment in the very air of her neighbourhood, he thought, as he ran lightly up the steps of the Gloucester Road Station and made his way to Sir John's.

The big, old-fashioned barouche was in waiting at the door, he perceived, and hastened his steps. Lady Archdale's plummy bonnet was nodding inside, and the horses were stamping and tossing their heads impatiently. Hester was standing on the doorstep, racquet in hand, adjusting her long chamois leather glove, waiting to see her parents depart before crossing to the square gardens; and Sir John was trotting in and out in chase of a dozen after-thoughts, with constant appeals to "Hetty" and parenthetic apologies to his wife.

"Then remember, when Rigsby's cart calls that case is to go back. Really very sorry to detain you, Amelia! It's all that old fool Markham's doing. *Why* he should have made a point of being out of the way just this minute——"

"You sent him yourself, dad. Told him to take Roswal out of the way. *I'll* see to your letters going all right."

"Very good, very good. You're going to play tennis with Jock and Fraulein, eh?"

"Only till Mrs. Holder comes for me. She's so uncertain it's a pity to waste the whole afternoon waiting for her."

Miss Hester was in her white tennis flannels with gay red skirts, and a red-lined hat on her pretty brown head. She looked as bright and fresh and sweet as a carnation, Edric thought, as he hurried up to make his presence known.

"Ha, Poynter, is that you?" cried Sir John. "Heard the news, eh? Let me introduce you to Lady Archdale. Amelia, Mr. Poynter, son of a very old friend of mine. No, he isn't, either. I'm always forgetting."

Lady Archdale bowed with prim graciousness, then beckoned Hester to her before Edric could do more than interchange a bow.

"Hester. You had better go at once to Mrs. Holder's. Now."

"Why, mother! Eunice is sure not to be ready."

"Never mind. I wish it."

Hester gave a resigned little pout and shrug of her shoulders, and tripped back to the house to deposit racquet and shoes. Edric followed her with his eyes, only giving half an ear to Sir John's important news.

"Only heard it myself for certain yesterday. I went to the Horse Guards——" Here Hester tripped out again, and the rest was lost.

"You'll get the orders directly, you may rely upon it."

"Oh, just so; Egypt. Yes, I suppose so," said Edric, vaguely. He had been hearing nothing else for the last three months, so was not as impressed as Sir John expected. Besides, just then Hester, in obedience to another murmured order from her mother, gave him a farewell bow and smile, and he was too much concerned at the sight of her retreating figure to attend to anything else.

Sir John noted his blank looks and frowned. "Why, you don't look half-pleased. I should have thrown up my hat and bolted off to order my outfit if I'd been you! But I suppose you young fellows think it the thing not to excite yourselves about such trifles now-a-days." And with a shade less of his wonted cordiality Sir John got into the carriage and nodded adieu.

"I hope there's nothing wrong with that boy," he grumbled. "Looks seedy and dissipated—or not that exactly, either. Didn't cheer up as a man ought to do at the prospect of fighting. I like him too; don't you, Amelia? I wish I hadn't seen him give that down look." And the good old General fell into a brown study.

"I wonder where Hester is?" Lady Archdale exclaimed in a tremor. "Can he possibly overtake her? Ought we to stop? She would think nothing of speaking to him, even if I wasn't there! Girls have no sense of reserve now-a-days. Do stop, John!"

"All right!" answered Sir John, who was used to his wife's flutterings; "she's safe enough. Out of sight, by this time. Now if that fellow doesn't drive faster I shan't meet Brabant at the club by four." And the carriage rolled on unchecked.

Hester's notions of modest reserve were as strict in their way as her mother's. She had no intention of going one single step out of her way to meet Edric, though she was as sure as of the sun in heaven that he had need of her, and his look of chagrin at her departure had gone to her heart. But Edric's ally was at hand.

Roswal had been sent out for exercise ten minutes previously, in the hope that for once the carriage might be allowed to start without the square being rendered hideous by his expostulations. He had decorously accompanied Markham for the length of two streets, and then without warning set off north north-east, south and so by west home again, just to see that no treachery was intended him; entering Bellingham Square by one corner before Markham arrived by the direct road at another. He bestowed a plunge and bark of recognition on Edric in passing, and tore onwards to the house, disappearing down the area. Back again, finding himself betrayed and everybody gone out without him. Over the railings of the Square at a bound and on to the tennis court. Nobody there but Jock and the German governess, whom he respected but did not admire. So with another mighty bound he emerged and executed a ferocious war dance and song round Edric as if it were *his* fault.

"Find her, old boy," said Edric, entreatingly, "like a blessed old Cuss as you are, and I'll love you for ever."



Roswal paused at this appeal to his understanding and mentally ran over the names of Hester's wonted haunts. He sniffed the air, then the ground, made a few tentative excursions to various corners, and at last, with a sudden joyous fling of his nose aloft, and a sharp bark of triumph, started off at a steady trot, Edric at his heels.

It was only to the next street after all, where at one of the doors stood a low pony carriage with a young lady in a red-lined hat inside. Roswal leapt in on her, causing an utter downfall of the white umbrella, easel, sketching stool, and other artistic paraphernalia with which the front seat had been piled. Hester started, blushed, greeted Roswal and scolded Edric in her confusion. "You wretch, how *did* you find me out! No, I don't mean you, Mr. Poynter;" and then they both laughed heartily and joined in re-establishing order, while a pretty woman in a cotton gown, with a white veil twisted round her straw hat stood looking at them in silence.

"Mr. Poynter!" she said at length, holding out her hand. "So you have found your way here at last."

Edric recognised a lady whom he had met and forgotten once or twice in his life time. "I was not exactly coming to call," he admitted.

"No, you know I don't want visitors in decent weather. Now, Hester, let's be off; the light will be lovely for the next two hours." And Mrs. Holder, who seemed in a desperate hurry, jumped in and took the reins.

"Roswal must come," said Hester.

"Of course, and Mr. Poynter, too, if he likes to pay his call there. He won't interrupt us much." The last words of this concession being inaudible in the roll of wheels and clatter of ponies' feet.

"Bring him!" Edric heard Hester call.

"Where to, I wonder?" thought Edric in some amusement at the eccentricity of the whole proceeding. He followed gaily, to the satisfaction of Roswal, who covered some score of miles in his frantic endeavours to divide his attention between him and the occupants of the fast retreating carriage. Finally he attached himself to Edric and brought him safely to Kensington Gardens.

## CHAPTER XXVII.

### IN KENSINGTON GARDENS AGAIN.

EDRIC paused with sudden distaste. It was the first time he had been there since the ill-omened day of his meeting with Euphrosyne, and he wished chance had brought him anywhere else. Roswal interpreted the stop to mean mistrust, and shot off like an arrow, returning before Edric had advanced many paces with a satisfied expression. "I knew I was right! They are here safe enough," it said.

So past the Round Pond and down the horse chestnut avenue Edric took his slow and reluctant way. What fatality was drawing him to that spot again? A superstitious thrill ran through him. The shadow of a tall, black-robed figure seemed to cross his path. He was close to the seat, he thought, where the gloom of her presence first fell on him. There it was, and now ——

The sunshine glinted gaily on a white dress with gay red skirts, and a tiny shoe holding a red-stockinged foot. Hester's eyes and Hester's smile met him in welcome from the very corner where Euphrosyne had crouched, dark and silently watchful, while he played fast and loose with his destiny.

Some distance off, across the grass, he could see the white umbrella, with Mrs. Holder under it busy with a study of trees and slanting sunshine. Hester was at work too, and Edric, even in his pre-occupation, stopped to notice the dainty bend of her head and the pretty poise of her hand as she glanced up from her sketch-book at a little group before her; two tiny children, released from their respective perambulators, solemnly propping up each other's wavering equilibrium, with great, grave eyes and mouths puckered with anxiety.

"To think of my finding you *here*," Edric exclaimed, taking the seat next her. "Here, of all places, where my troubles all began. And now I have come to ask you to help me out of the tangle—if there *is* a way out."

"There generally is to most tangles, and you generally come out of them at the very point where you went in. It is a good omen."

"I hope so—and yet I don't know what business I have to come and inflict my perplexities upon you, Miss Archdale, except that I have no one else, and I don't know a creature in the world whose opinion I'd take before yours."

Hester secretly applauded his discrimination, but she only said rather primly: "Have you no intimate friend in the regiment? Or my father would be a better adviser than I, perhaps."

"Just so," catching eagerly at the suggestion; "but I want *you* to tell me first whether I *ought* to bother Sir John about the affair. I don't know whether it's a matter on which I ought to consult anybody. My own head isn't clever enough to deal with it. I feel like a Guy Fawkes that has lost his way, and doesn't know whether it's coals or gunpowder he will poke his candle into next."

Hester smiled encouragement, giving, as she listened, absent touches to the little pencil sketches that dotted the page of her book. Edric began, awkwardly enough, to tell what had befallen him since their last meeting.

It was a hard story to tell, and Edric was not fluent by nature; besides, he was embarrassed by a fear of saying too much. He stopped short.

"I'm making it all sound ridiculous, I know. You'll say she was merely a crack-brained old woman, and laugh at her, and I don't want

you to do that. I am sorrier for her than I can tell. She's under some fearful delusion I feel sure, but somehow I couldn't get her told. I tried to stop her and explain things, but it was no use."

"It isn't possible that she has some real interest in you?" asked Hester, deep in thought.

"Do you mean—is she a long-lost grandmother or anything in that way? Well, scarcely. I'm one of half-a-dozen boys, and I've never heard of Laurie or Jim being haunted in this fashion. Besides, I think I know our family by heart; we are a clannish lot."

Hester shivered uneasily. "It all sounds like a snare of some sort. You are sure the other—Madame Euphrosyne—was not in the background somewhere?"

"Not that I saw."

"And the old lady is respectable?"

"Unimpeachably so, as you would say if you heard who she is."

"And nothing more was said about your friend, Mr. Monk?"

"Not a syllable."

"What can it all mean? I suppose she's mad, but I wish you hadn't taken those things. Can't you see her again and insist on a clear understanding, and if she won't have one give them back again?"

"I wish to heaven I could!" was his fervent response; "but that's just what I cannot do now. They're gone."

"Gone! How? When?"

"That same night. I only wish I knew how. I got back to Camp dog-tired, but I made them safe enough before I went to bed. Locked them in my writing-drawer, and put the key under my pillow. I had an early start to the ranges before me next morning and meant to wake at reveillé but overslept myself and had to get off in a scramble without breakfast. I had the key with me fast enough—here it is—and directly I got back took a look into the place. Empty! I declare, Miss Archdale, I felt as if my wits were going! I had to sit down and think hard for some time before I could be sure that I hadn't dreamt the whole thing. Sometimes I begin to wonder now if that's not possible. Suppose I had been a little off my head that night?"

Edric's forehead contracted painfully, and a queer, uncertain look came into his eyes. Hester watching him keenly, read the traces of the strain his strong young nature had undergone, and instinctively guessed the relief this confidence must be to him.

"Tell me what you did next," she demanded. "Went off to Folkestone with the story at once?"

"Just what I did, after I had examined about a dozen writing-drawers and locks and about two hundred keys. No one has anything like mine—drawer or key, and the armourer says it's impossible the lock can have been picked. Besides, when could it have been done? The police saw no one suspicious about that night, and

Dalyell—in the same hut—says he came in late and sat up half the night, but heard no stir in my room.”

“And at Folkestone you found ——?”

“Nothing! The lady had left that morning for town, though the rooms had been taken till the end of the week.”

“You got her town address?”

“And have been there, with the same result. She is too ill to see anyone, and there the matter ends. Ought I to go to Scotland Yard, or would that be the last thing the poor lady would wish? Help me, Miss Archdale. What must I do?”

He drew a long breath of relief as he asked the question, and saw her bright little face grow intent on thinking out his answer.

“Have you told me everything?” she asked, slowly, considering as she spoke. “I don’t mean the lady’s name—I would rather not hear it—but is there no suspicion of that other woman’s hand being in this?”

Now Edric had been far from intending that Hester or anyone should hear of the warnings he had received; and, indeed, had been doing his utmost to forget them himself ever since, but there was no resisting the inquisitorial gaze of Hester’s dark eyes, if, indeed, he had not felt convinced that she knew quite well that some suppression of truth was intended. So he flung his last remaining scruple overboard and told of Euphrosyne’s letter; and, as a natural consequence, of the appeal from Elsie that had followed it up. Miss Hester’s pretty, fine eyebrows drew together in slight displeasure, though it is to be feared many details of the interview were omitted.

“Elsie Paramount! Rather an impertinent piece of officiousness on her part. What could *she* have to say to you?”

Edric explained, but Hester’s disapproval remained unabated.

“What fanciful nonsense! It’s very kind of you to take so much interest in her and her brother, but I think you and Rose and Mr. Stannard are turning the poor child’s head amongst you,” and with a tiny toss of her own she dismissed that part of the subject and fell to pondering on the rest.

“It’s very irrational and feminine to feel sure of anything without a reason, is it not?” she said at last, “but that’s just what I am. I am quite sure that Euphrosyne has got your letter and ring.”

Edric’s eyes flashed at her excitedly. “Then I am not a monomaniac! I know she has them! I can’t tell why, but it has been running in my head ever since without rhyme or reason. I feel just like Carroll when he jumps up, upsets half the furniture and goes for something with the poker. It’s sure to be a cat; but neither you nor he nor anyone else can tell how he knew it was there. ‘It gives him creeps,’ he says, and I’ve found out the sensation exactly. But if you are sure, too, that makes gospel truth of it.”

Hester nodded. “See here,” and she began to tell off her points on her finger-tips, “we are not so devoid of argument as I fancied.

Euphrosyne and your lady were in concert at first. Now they are apart, and she has a reason for preventing your meeting. Suppose she doesn't want you to receive that letter. How do we know what's in it? Something damaging to her, most likely. Anyhow, you have met despite her, and the only resource is to steal it, which she succeeds in doing—shall we say—aided by the good offices of that young scamp, Sam Paramount.”

“No,” spoke Edric, positively, “that won't do. You must give up Paramount as a fellow-conspirator. It isn't in him.”

“Very well,” she agreed, good-humouredly, “but it's a pity. It fitted my scheme of things so admirably. Of course she would have had to square him first. And equally of course he might have let Elsie into the secret to some extent, which would amply account for dreams and previsions. However, there's nothing so dangerous as a too perfect theory; so mine may go.”

“Then you think it is still her doing that I am not allowed to see Lady Valeria?” asked Edric, incautiously; “or Mr. Meynell's?”

Hester put up both her hands to her ears with a look of dismay. “Lady Valeria Meynell,” she cried. “Oh! I couldn't help hearing, but I'll never let the name pass my lips. What can it all mean? Stop!” and she checked his next words with an imperative little upraised hand. “I have an idea.” He held his peace while the thought seemed to dawn and grow luminous in the brown depths of her eyes, and then she smiled at him outright in triumph.

“Why, I believe I can help you myself, just a little! I have a friend in the very house, Mabel Brant. I have been with Rose to Seagrave Place to call on her, though I had forgotten all about it till this minute. At any rate I know her well enough to go again. I am sure that she will help you to see her mother if I tell her the need. May I? Can you trust me to say just enough and no more?”

“Trust you! I only wish you had the telling of the whole story!”

“Do you? *Would* you? Ought I? Isn't it too much of an interference in any person's affairs? I know what mother would say, but I never know how far she's right and I've no one else to ask,” cried Hester, distracted between quick terror of overstepping the bounds of rightful discretion and the keen sense of power that was tingling through her to the finger-tips that were burning to dip themselves into this mysterious pie.

“I don't know myself,” Edric answered, his sensitiveness aroused on her behalf. “You've been awfully kind to me, and I'm afraid I have presumed on it a little. If you were my sister, or—or—my solicitor, I should like nothing better than to throw myself and my affairs into your hands to be dealt with as you should choose. As it is, I think you've done as much for me as I have any right to ask. We might trust to the chapter of accidents now.”

“I wish you had done so from the first,” she exclaimed, impetuously, blushing hotly as she spoke. “This is the second time you

have made me feel intolerably presumptuous and meddlesome. I've been spoilt with people perpetually coming to me with their troubles for help or advice. I've grown so conceited that wherever I see a difficulty I feel that it's my business to make an end of it. I want to manage everything and everybody. Mamma says it's my besetting sin, but I never believed her before! I see it now, and how detestable and unladylike I must seem."

Hester sprang from her seat as she poured forth this railing accusation against herself, with angry tears rising to her eyes and bright indignant glances at Edric, who rose too, altogether confounded and distressed. If he had argued with her, or attempted to sooth her, the poor little maiden's suddenly awakened pride and self-mistrust might have pricked her into some sharp reply, but blundering as he considered himself, he knew better than to attempt to do either, and only stood with a deprecating, utterly uncomprehending air till she stopped speaking.

"I beg your pardon," he said, earnestly, "I had no idea I had ever offended you before. What a dense dog I must be to cut my own throat in this fashion. Offend *you*? I couldn't do it even unintentionally. Only tell me what I said or did."

She burst into a hearty laugh, as sudden and unexpected as her anger. "What a vixen you must think me! Couldn't you see that it was myself I was scolding? When you gently suggested that I was neither your sister nor your solicitor it gave me a sort of shock to find how I had fallen into my old tricks of lecturing and dictating, and how meekly you must have been submitting to me."

"I didn't mean solicitor, I assure you; the word slipped in in place of a better."

"Suppose we drop the subject and go to Eunice now." And Hester smoothing her ruffled plumage, so to speak, picked up her sketch book and stepped demurely by his side across the grass to the white umbrella. Circumnavigating it they found Mrs. Holder with intent face and rapid brush running a race with the sun, catching the changing criss-cross shadows on the grass down a vista of lambent green light and flickering leaves. She wasted no side-glance on the new comers, and Edric stood embarrassed for a second.

"Eunice! It's time to stop. Mr. Poynter can't stay here for ever on the chance of your speaking to him," interrupted Hester, cruelly indifferent to the sudden shimmer of pearly light on the satin bark of a beech tree that brought out the very effect her friend had been waiting for for weeks.

"Um!" responded Mrs. Holder, brush in mouth.

"I hope Mr. Holder and the boys are well," he ventured.

"Eh—h?" mixing something in frantic haste.

"That's all you'll get till I put down the umbrella and shut up her paint box presently," laughed Hester, "so you needn't wait."

He did wait though, for a sunny half hour longer, turning over



Hester's book and discussing her studies for her next picture, and everything else besides under Heaven.

"Those babies were the very models I wanted for a mediæval child wedding, in some dim, splendid old Cathedral—an Italian one, I think."

Edric could have lounged on the grass all day listening to her musical chatter, and watching the deft, brown fingers as they pencilled little illustrative out-lines as her fancies required; but time was fleeting, and it was necessary to recall Mrs. Holder from the world of Art, which act Hester performed in her own determined fashion.

"Is that you, Mr. Poynter! Have you been long here?" she asked, briskly, rapidly packing up her tools as she talked. "I thought I heard Hester talking to someone. Come home and have some tea? No? Well then, Hester, we must make haste; I believe I've asked a lot of people for this afternoon. Was it for music? No! It was to meet Mr. Van Cruisens and see his Canadian sketches. Good gracious!"

They hurried in a party to find the carriage, and Edric only secured one moment for the last words which he could not venture on sooner. "Then I am quite forgiven, Miss Hester?"

"Of course, of course," she said, hurrying on. "Please don't say any more about it."

"Then if you *really* have brought yourself to overlook my unhappy remark, and if Lady Charles Brant *should* be able to help us——"

"What then?" asked Hester, half smiling.

"Don't you think *you* could put my case before Lady Valeria a thousand times better than I should?" And the crafty youth drew a long breath at the extent of his own audacity.

"I'm not your sister or your solicitor, Mr. Poynter," with lofty disdain. Then melting: "But it's just what I should dearly love to do. It seems so hateful to go on at cross purposes when a word of explanation may set things straight once for all. Trust me. I'll see your old lady and tell her you are a friend of mine and how you have lost her ring and letter. Anybody might do that—might they not?"

"Certainly. The most casual of acquaintances."

"Then if she wants to see you she can arrange it, and you'll tell her all the rest."

"Right joyfully, though I'm not proud of my own share in the story."

"Good-bye. You may trust to me. If you and I and Lady Valeria are alive we shall have made an end of the mystery before the week is out."

(To be continued.)

## SHRIMPS AND PRAWNS.

BY THE REV. J. G. WOOD, M.A.

"I chanced at breakfast the other day to wish I knew something of the biography of a shrimp, the rather that I was under the impression of having seen jumping shrimps on a sandy shore express great satisfaction in their life.

"My shelves are loaded with books on natural history, but I could find nothing about shrimps except that 'they swim in the water, or lie upon the sand in shoals, and are taken in multitudes for the table.'"—J. RUSKIN.

SO says Mr. Ruskin at the conclusion of a letter upon the choice of books. And as one so deeply versed in literature laments his ignorance of shrimp-life, it is probable that some of the readers of the ARGOSY may share his ignorance, and may wish to see a condensed life-history of Shrimps.

Now, the word "shrimp," as Mr. Pickwick said of the word politics, "comprises in itself a difficult study of no inconsiderable magnitude."

People who do not happen to be zoologists have a vague idea that all shrimps are alike, and, as Mr. Ruskin has done, think that shrimps, which never leave the water, are identical with the sand-hoppers that fringe the edge of the water but do not enter it.

The jumping of the sand-hoppers does not express great satisfaction with their life, but is simply a convenient mode of locomotion, like the jumping of the kangaroo or flea. It is always employed when they are forcibly ejected from their domiciles beneath the sand, or are trying to escape from the many enemies which feed upon them.

Although they belong to the same class as the shrimps: namely, the crustacea: there is scarcely a Scotch cousinship between them, and they have no more right to the name of shrimp, than the duck-bill has to the name of cat.

What then is a shrimp?

As I have already mentioned, the shrimp belongs to the great class of crustacea, so called because the outer skin is formed into a sort of crust by the deposition of lime within its tissues. In those places where the tail or limbs need to be bent no lime is deposited, so that the joints are almost identical with those of the old tilting armour.

The amount of lime differs greatly according to the various groups, the shells of many crabs being of stony hardness, while those of the shrimps and prawns are comparatively soft.

Indeed, in the prawns the lime deposit is so slight that when the creature is dried, the contraction of the skin squeezes the particles of lime out of the tissues and leaves it in the form of a white powder upon the exterior of the body. I have just written the word "Shrimp" upon a slate, using a dried prawn by way of a pencil.

This lime deposit can be beautifully shown by placing a piece of prawn-shell under the microscope, and illuminating it with polarised light. The peculiar dark cross upon the brilliantly coloured disc proves that the particles are those of carbonate of lime. The shell of the oyster exhibits a similar appearance.

This lime-deposit exercises so great an influence upon the whole life of a crustacean that I shall presently have occasion to revert to it.

Casting aside the strictly scientific side of the question, we will now glance at the creatures which are generally considered, and eaten, as shrimps. They are usually proclaimed by the sea-side barrow men as "brown shrimps" and "red shrimps," the latter being sometimes drawled out in a prolonged wail into "pra-a-a-rns." The distinction is perfectly correct, the brown being true shrimps, and the red true prawns.

There is no difficulty in distinguishing between them, the shrimps having the top of the head flat, while the head of a prawn is armed with a long curved projection, very deeply notched, so that the one can be distinguished from the other by the touch alone without the assistance of the eye.

As far, however, as the purpose of this life sketch is concerned, we may treat them as identical.

When I deliver a lecture on this subject I always send a lad round the audience with a basket of shrimps or prawns, asking each hearer to take one, not to be eaten, but to be used as an "object lesson." If my readers can possess themselves of a shrimp or prawn—I prefer the former—and will follow by its aid the next few pages, they will see that the word "shrimp" does indeed "comprise in itself a difficult study of no inconsiderable magnitude." Mechanics and Chemistry have already been touched upon, and we shall find that several other branches of science are involved in the life history of the shrimp.

In the first place it will be noticed that the shrimp has its skeleton and muscles arranged on principles exactly opposite to those of the vertebrated animals, such, for example, as man. We carry our skeletons inside our bodies, and the muscles are attached to the outside of the bones. But in all the crustacea an exactly opposite system prevails, the skeleton being outside the body and the muscles being attached to the interior of the bones; if, indeed, the parts of the skeleton can rightly be called by that name. Here, then, the science of Physiology is represented in the shrimp.

Next we come to another detail of Physiology. The entire body of the shrimp consists of a number of separate rings of the lime-strengthened material which has already been mentioned. When carefully analysed, these rings, or "segments" as they are often called, are found to be twenty in number, the last five constituting the so-called "tail." On the under surface of these segments are certain appendages which take different names according to the office

which they fulfil. Sometimes they are termed legs. Sometimes they are paddles or "swimmerets." Sometimes they are called claws or pincers. Sometimes they are modified into jaws, and so forth. But whatever may be their office they are all modifications of the simple appendage, thus carrying out the universal law that there is no waste in Nature, and that no new organ is ever made when the same object can be obtained by the modification of some organ which already exists.

Take your shrimp and straighten it. This is the natural attitude, the curved position with which we are so familiar being caused by the contraction of the muscles under the influence of boiling water. Also when a shrimp dies a natural death the body becomes bent, so that the aquarium keeper can always know whether the creatures be alive or dead.

Bend the tail backwards and forwards, and note the wonderful hinges which enable the successive segments to work upon each other. They are far superior to those of plate armour, inasmuch that they need no rivets, and even when the outer skin has been shed, and is nearly as transparent as glass, the joints will play upon each other as freely as they did when the creature was alive.

Now turn it on its back and fasten it down to a piece of flat cork, or even a soft deal board, by a couple of pins. Beginning at the end of the body you will see that it is drawn out into a sharp and flattened projection called the "telson," *i.e.*, the end of the body. Some anatomists consider that the telson ought to take rank as a segment, and that the shrimp really possesses twenty-one segments. Just above the telson are two double appendages, very much lengthened and flattened, and fringed with strong hairs, so as to look like a fan.

This "tail fan," as it may well be called, is the chief instrument of locomotion when the shrimp is alarmed. I have already mentioned that the natural attitude of the shrimp is with its body extended. Now when it fears an enemy, all it has to do is to contract the body suddenly. The enormous flexor muscles, of which the "tail" is composed, act with such force that the shrimp is driven backwards through the water with such speed that the eye can scarcely follow its track.

The lobster, whose tail-fan must be familiar to every one, is said to drive itself through the water for a distance of thirty feet at a single stroke, and to guide its course with such accuracy, that it can shoot through an aperture scarcely wider than its body without touching the sides.

Next to the tail-fan come five pairs of leg-like appendages. These are popularly called "swimmerets," on account of one of their offices, which is to act as paddles.

By their rapid movements they propel the animal through the water at a fairly swift rate. When at rest they are held forward at an angle with the body, the hair-fringe, with which they are edged,

looking at a little distance like a halo. Viewed closely, each looks like a very delicate feather.

But they pay more than a double duty. When the shrimp wishes to bury itself in the sand, it poises itself over the selected spot and agitates the swimmerets violently so as to scoop a pit in the sand. Into this pit the shrimp settles itself, and is almost immediately covered by the sand. As, during the excavation, the sand is much stirred up so as to conceal the creature from sight, the fishermen, who have a great knack of hitting upon characteristic names, call the shrimp by the name of "sand-raiser." Similarly they designate the common shore crab by the name of "toe-biter."

As I want to watch shrimps and not only to see sand, there is no sand in my aquarium, but only some stones to give the shrimps a foothold. It is amusing to see a shrimp when first introduced. It darts to the bottom and works its swimmerets rapidly, trying to bury itself. Finding that it makes no impression on the glass, it climbs a stone and repeats the process, but after a time seems to accept the situation.

Another use of the swimmerets is that to them the eggs of the female are attached. By their incessant movements, the eggs are washed by fresh supplies of water, and are, therefore, brought in contact with the oxygen which is necessary for their full development. Next to the swimmerets come the true legs, which are used for locomotion.

As the shrimp is not a predacious animal, and needs not to run with any amount of speed, the legs are exceedingly slight, especially the two front pairs. As, however, the body of the shrimp is almost entirely sustained by the water, strength of limb is of little consequence. Here is another example of the axiom that there is no waste in Nature. Had the legs possessed strength of structure, that strength would have been wasted.

Now we come to a pair of semi-legs, which are modified into prehensile organs.

They have the same joints as the swimmerets, but instead of being slight and attenuated, they are very much stronger than any of the other limbs and, by a very simple modification of the two last joints, become changed into forceps. In the shrimp these forceps are comparatively small, but in the crab and lobster they attain to great dimensions and strength.

Nothing can be simpler or more effectual than the means by which this change is made. The last joint retains its original size, but the last joint but one is much widened, in order to accommodate an extremely powerful flexor muscle, by which the last joint can be pulled against its predecessor so as to act as pincers.

Another point in the structure of these limbs must here be noticed. The length of the joints of these prehensile legs is so exactly calculated, that when the limb is bent the forceps at its

extremity are exactly opposite the mouth, so that the food can be transferred to the jaws with absolute certainty.

But, where is the mouth to which food can be brought by the bent claw-legs? Shrimps and prawns, like other crustacea, do not have their mouths in their heads like the higher animals. They resemble Othello's men "whose heads do grow beneath their shoulders," as represented in the ever delightful "Nuremberg Chronicle," and other works of the same epoch.

Granting that a man could be destitute of head, and obliged to accommodate his eyes, nose, and mouth in his breast, his mouth would occupy the same relative position as that of the shrimp. As the pincers cannot place the food actually into the mouth, several more pairs of limbs are modified into semi-jaws, which like the jaws of insects, work sideways, and not up and down like those of the vertebrated animals.

It is very interesting to watch a shrimp or prawn feed, and to see how deftly they can use their forceps and jaws. I kept some *Æsop* prawns for a long time, and found that their favourite food was the soft body of a hermit-crab. Holding the food with one claw, the prawn daintily picks it to pieces with the other, holding the morsels to the mouth. Here they are seized by the foot-jaws, which transfer them from one to the other until they are passed into the mouth. If you will press the foot-jaws aside with a pin, you will easily see the large mouth. There is scarcely any throat, the mouth opening almost directly into the stomach, just as the outer door of a cottage opens directly into the living-room.

Now turn the shrimp over, and you will see just below the eyes a rather large dark spot. This shows the position of the stomach, and, on opening it, you can easily pass a bristle through the stomach, out at the mouth, and between the series of jaws and foot-jaws.

When the shrimp is living the stomach is very perceptible, the integuments being nearly transparent. There are just now several shrimps swimming about between my eyes and the light; and the only dark portions about them are the stomach, the tail-fan, and a narrow stripe near the end of the body. Boiling renders the tissues opaque, and gives them the reddish hue which does not exist in the living shrimp any more than it does in the living lobster.

Now we are obliged to face a rather difficult problem. How can the shrimp grow? Those portions of the skin which remain soft are fairly elastic, but by far the greater portion of the skin is strengthened with lime and perfectly rigid.

The answer to this problem is, that the shrimp, like all other crustacea, grows until it can grow no longer, and then it bursts. If you bend a shrimp forwards, you will find that the large shield, or carapace, which covers the head and all the body except the tail, will give way at the junction, showing a large portion of unprotected skin. When the shrimp has grown until its garments are too tight for



comfort, it bends itself forward until the skin is stretched to the utmost. Suddenly, the over-taxed skin gives way, and the spectator might naturally think that the creature was bent on committing suicide.

Nothing of the sort. The shrimp is making preparations for extending, and not for shortening its life. By a series of violent struggles, it draws its whole body out of the gap, even pulling its legs and long feelers out of their sheath, leaving behind it the whole of its shell.

I have the cast shell of a large prawn which was shed in the fine aquarium of the Crystal Palace. It is so perfect that the closest investigation can hardly detect its real nature. The fact is that for some time previous to the "ecdysis," as this process is scientifically termed, a second skin has been in process of formation, so that the shrimp is practically wearing two coats, one over the other. Having wriggled with many struggles its way out of the old coat, it can take advantage of the elasticity of the new vesture to expand as much as it needs.

For a time the shrimp is soft and helpless, but a new deposition of lime soon takes place, and in a few days the shrimp is fit for duty as before, but considerably larger. The celebrated "soft-crabs" of southern America are simply land crabs which have shed their outer coats and have been captured before the lime could be deposited within the tissues of the new coat.

Perhaps the reader, if a Londoner, may have seen the phenomenon which house-maids term a "white black-beetle." This is simply a larval or pupal cockroach, which has shed one of its skins, and has not had time for the air to have its effect in hardening and darkening the tissues. Many of these creatures are sent to me annually as "extraordinary examples of albinism in insects." By the time that the specimen has reached me it is either brown, or mottled like an unripe horse-chestnut, and I always return it to the sender with thanks.

The ecdysis, or "exuviation" as it is sometimes termed, is not accomplished without much trouble and some risk, like the moulting of birds, to which it bears some analogy.

Now and then it happens that the shrimp fails in pulling one or more of its legs out of their former skins, and, in point of fact, pulls them off, leaving them in the shed skin. To us the misfortune would seem irremediable, but the shrimp treats it as only a temporary inconvenience. It puts up with the loss until the next moult, when a small limb springs up in the place of that which was lost. At the following moult, the limb increases its dimensions, and after the third or fourth moult, both limbs will be of equal size. Lobsters and crabs are often seen with claws of different sizes, the discrepancy being due to the power of reproducing shed limbs.

I have already mentioned that there is an analogy between the moulting of the bird and that of the crustacean. The bird's moult, however, is a very trifling operation compared with that of a lobster, crab,

shrimp, or prawn. The bird sheds nothing except its feathers, while the crustacean throws off the footstalks and external cornea of the eyes, the covering of the gills, and the entire lining of the stomach, beside the whole of the skin. As is the case with birds, the shrimp sometimes succumbs to moulting. There is now before me the body of one of my own shrimps which has not survived the operation. It has shed all the covering of the tail, but has been unable to extricate its head and legs from the carapace. The mention of this fact brings us to the eyes and gills. The former are compound organs resembling those of insects, except that whereas the lenses of the insect eye are invariably hexagonal, those of the prawn or shrimp are square.

Now we come to a question of Optics.

There are many hundreds—in insects, many thousands—of these lenses, each of which appears to be capable of projecting a distinct image upon the optic nerve. If you take a portion of the compound eye of a bluebottle or a butterfly, clear it from the pigments, and fit it to the object-glass of a microscope, you will find that anything which is seen through it will be multiplied in proportion to the number of facets which come within the field of vision. Does, then, the creature see many images or only one?

There has been much controversy respecting the theory of "Mosaic Vision," as it is called, from the resemblance of the lenses to the little squares of Mosaic work. I think, however, that there can be no doubt on the subject. If we, who have two eyes, only see a single image, there is no reason why the two hundred, or even two thousand lenses should not have the effect of projecting a single image upon the optic nerve of the shrimp.

Now for the gills, which are substitutes for lungs.

If you will lift up the carapace, you will see on each side a row of white, feather-like objects, closely pressed against the sides. These are the gills, which, to all intents and purposes, resemble those of the fishes. In the lobster they are popularly known as "ladies' fingers." In the sea, where the water is always in motion, the shrimp has no trouble in breathing, but in the still water of an aquarium, the creature is obliged to keep some of its foot-jaws in rapid motion, so as to drive a current of water over the gills.

Another question. Of what use is the shrimp, except to be eaten with tea and bread and butter?

Here we find that the creature plays no unimportant part in cosmic economy. The sea is filled with living beings, myriads of which die daily. Unless some means existed by which their dead bodies could be removed, the water would be polluted and unable to sustain life. So, the shrimp forms part of the great army of scavengers which has been appointed for the purification of the sea, and although individually it may seem to be insignificant, it is collectively of the highest importance, and could not be spared without disturbing the whole economy of Nature.

## LADY CLARISSA'S VASES.

BY A. DE GRASSE STEVENS.

IT was many years before the epoch when the world began to "live up" to lilies and sunflowers, Bristol compôtes and Worcester teapots, that Harry Vane and I fell in love with each other.

Harry was in the army. He had had his commission purchased for him, in the good old-fashioned way, by his great uncle Colonel Vane, whom everyone bowed down before and in a manner worshipped. Harry said he was "a little tin-god on wheels" to his family and friends; but I thought that was disrespectful and told Harry so, and would not laugh until he pulled my curls and twitched my fine embroidered collar half off, and then I scolded him while I laughed. It is so easy to laugh when you are quite young and in love, and the April sky is blue and all the daffodils are peeping up their downy yellow heads by the old brick path in the far meadow.

Well, Harry had his commission and could write himself down as captain in the Artillery. But considering he had no other visible means of support, except a paltry hundred pounds a-year that did not even pay his tailor and his mess, I couldn't see that we were any better off for Colonel Vane's generosity than we were before. But the Colonel said we were "infinitely benefited, and that Harry ought to be proportionately grateful."

I never could understand proportion. Consequently I looked very shamefaced and confused when the Colonel spoke in this way. I knew he didn't like one to be confused, however; and so one day when he had repeated this axiom several times, frowning very fiercely and shaking his old head until his wig came quite awry and looked very rakish over his left eyebrow, I plucked up sufficient spirit to reply. What I said wasn't very original, but it sounded so.

"I am sure Colonel Vane we do thank you, Harry and I; especially as we both feel that gratitude is a sense of favours to come."

I smiled my prettiest as I said this, and was quite unprepared to see the Colonel grow very red and choke in his asthmatic old throat, and order me to leave the room, throwing after me a tender little speech that ended in "baggage." I was horridly upset and cried so violently and so long that Harry grew unhappy and went down on his knees on the damp moss in the Chinese summer-arbour, and entreated me to fly with him there and then, and be married by special licence at St. Martin's in the Fields, and march off with him to Russia, where all our brave troops were being ordered. But I was a sensible girl; and when I saw Harry in such distress and ready to sacrifice his mess and his tailor for me, I cheered up and wiped my eyes and told

him I loved him dearly and that I would not mind the Colonel's little compliments. Then Harry kissed me and we were very happy, in spite of the grinning Chinese figures that adorned the walls of the garden-arbour, and whose excessively pointed fingers had always been a terror to me from my childhood, when they used to wave and beckon at me in a mysterious and most unpleasant manner.

Glasses of fashion and moulds of form are not every day affairs ; and if you are lucky enough to have had one held up to you all the sixteen years of your life, it is a sad pity and shows a great moral depravity if you evince a desire to shatter the mould or make faces at the glass. At least, so my Aunt Clarissa said, and she ought to know, because she was brought up on Miss Burney and the musical glasses, could repeat whole cantos of the "Seasons," and delighted in Mrs. Barbauld's poems.

I lived with my Aunt Clarissa, and was, in a manner, adopted by her when I was left an orphan. She was Lady Clarissa Mallery, but she was so simple-minded and unaffected that no one ever thought of her rank, and her title was more often than not forgotten. Aunt Clarissa had but two faults : she was obstinate and she was dilatory. When once she made up her mind upon a subject, the laws of the Medes and Persians were as pie-crust compared to the firmness of her views. Equally exasperating was her unwillingness to do anything in time. I used to tell Harry her ruling motto was : never do to-day what you can put off until to-morrow. It was trying enough in ordinary daily matters connected with the house, the gardens, the servants, and the poor people ; but I have good cause to remember her failing at a time when it nearly cost me my happiness and my lover.

One morning in early summer Aunt Clarissa came down exceptionally early. She looked so important and mysterious I felt sure some secret expedition was on hand. Moreover she wore her snuff brocaded pelisse and big bonnet, and took her tea and toast thus arrayed, smiling at me and peering about in her short-sighted fashion.

"Betty," she said in her low and pleasant voice : "Betty, I am going up to London by the next train. I hope you won't be lonely. And, my dear, when is the next train ?"

I found the local time-table, and made out the hour for her departure to be nine forty-five ; it was now only half past seven. For two full hours she would have to sit in her pelisse and bonnet, but she wouldn't take them off. "I might be late you see, Betty, and that you know would be very awkward."

I did not offer to accompany Aunt Clarissa. She strongly objected to companionship on her little trips to town ; but I saw her comfortably started and then I returned to my numerous little duties. One was the dusting of the drawing-room. This was a long process, for Aunt Clarissa's drawing-room was a perfect museum of old china and

"rubbish," as Harry termed it. Many were the spoils, rescued from shipwrecked vessels on the "Goodwins," that had come to her hands ; curious Eastern ware, Moorish plates, Japanese lacquer, tiny Chinese tea-services, and quaint silver punch ladles, boasting a golden guinea in the bowl. All these were my special charge, and careful indeed must be the fingers that guided broom and duster among them. While I was thus engaged a curly head was thrust through the open window and a pair of fearless blue eyes sought mine.

"Come along, Betty," cried a gay, young voice. "Drop that rag and come out to me."

My name was Elizabeth, but much to my chagrin I was never called anything but Betty.

Of course I obeyed Harry. At that moment of my life, loving, honouring and obeying seemed the most natural things in all the world. What we did all that long, lovely summer day I will not recount. I have not forgotten one item of the golden hours. But since all women have some such memories locked away in the past, why should I make mine public property ?

Aunt Clarissa came home to late tea, but she did not ask Harry to stay ; so he, with a very bad grace, said good evening. I thought Aunt Clarissa looked tired, and if possible more mysterious than ever. She was very silent during the tea hour, though she kept smiling to herself continually. After Barker had taken away the things, and laid out my aunt's netting and the weekly newspaper, and made up the fire and gone away, bearing the discarded pelisse and bonnet, Aunt Clarissa spoke for the first time.

"Betty, child, go into the drawing-room and fetch me the 'Gustavus' vases from the chimney shelf."

In wondering astonishment I performed my errand, returning with the two vases. Aunt Clarissa took one, still smiling, and looked at it intently, turning it round and round in her delicate old hands.

"Do you think them very beautiful, Betty?" she asked.

"I think them very ugly, Aunt," I answered, regarding the remaining vase unsympathetically. "There is nothing very beautiful in a whitey-grey ground with curious raised figures in blue and scarlet on one side, and a shield supported by a cross between an angel and a griffin on the other."

Aunt Clarissa laughed.

"I had a little adventure in town to-day, Betty. Some people would be excited over it, but I am not. I am not to be humbugged you know, Betty."

"Oh, no, of course not, Aunt." But she *was* taken in almost every day of her life.

"Well, Betty," she continued, "I was walking along Wardour Street looking for a certain shop the Colonel had recommended ; I wanted to match my Pekin teapot that Barker broke the other day. And as I was looking into this window and that (for I made up my



mind, Betty, I would not go into any shop without first seeing blue Pekin in the window) I saw a vase that seemed strangely familiar to me. It was set aside in a velvet case from the other things. I remembered in a moment why it looked so familiar; it was the counterpart of my two 'Gustavus' vases at home; only it was broken—the head of the angel-supporter was gone. I went in and asked about it. The shopman, a very civil man indeed, Betty, though rather big and burly, was quite affable, and told me all about the little vase: how old it was and how rare, and what trouble he had been at to obtain this one specimen. And then I told him about my two vases: and he grew more polite still, and seemed so interested that I told him how they came to me and that they had belonged to my great-grandfather, who had them from Admiral Hornsey, who could remember getting them from John Jolly, whose father rescued them from the *Gustavus*: as fine a sailing vessel as ever fell a victim to the 'Ship-swallower.' Well, when I had told him all this, and how transparent they were, and how bright the colours, he grew very impressive and asked for my address."

"Oh, Aunt Clarissa," I cried, "I hope you didn't give it to him?"

"Yes I did, Betty," said my Aunt a little tremulously. "But I am sure it could do no harm, for he really grew quite friendly, and showed me out most politely. And that is my little adventure, Betty. And now you may put the 'Gustavuses' back again, and I think I will go to bed."

Not long after this a great sorrow came to me; my very first, and therefore most bitter and overwhelming. Harry was ordered off to the Crimea. Of course we had both known that this must come, and we thought we were prepared for it; but who is ever prepared for heart-breaks and separation from beloved ones? I was not, and I wept day and night until I could scarcely see and was half ill. Harry said I was not a soldier's sweetheart, but I was too wretched to care. I thought of the terrible long, long miles we should be parted; of the fighting and the bloodshed; of the horrible uncertainty; of the torturing suspense and agony; of the helpless, hopeless waiting. I could not be brave.

Harry comforted me as best he could, and one day as we sat hand in hand in the dim old drawing-room, my eye caught sight of the 'Gustavus' vases and I told him of Aunt Clarissa's adventure in Wardour Street. He laughed heartily as he got up to look at them.

"You had better take great care of them, Betty," he said, "for when I come home again we shall need a nest egg to start on. Then Aunt Clarissa can give you these firkins, and we will sell them for shekels and live on the proceeds."

It was all very well for Harry to laugh, but I could not join with him. My imagination could not leap forward, as his did, into the future; my present absorbed all my faculties.



Well, the evil day arrived and Harry was gone from me and I did not die. The long days became weeks and the weeks rolled into months, and I found myself going about just as usual; fulfilling all my little duties, dusting the drawing-room, reading to Aunt Clarissa, and hoping against hope for happier tidings from the Crimea.

One morning, about twelve o'clock, early in the new year, as Aunt Clarissa and I were sitting over our needlework in the morning-room, Barker appeared and announced in her most prim fashion:

"If you please, me lady, Mr. Israels to see y'r ledyship."

"I don't know any Mr. Israels," said my aunt. "Barker, you know I am not acquainted with any such person."

"So I should have said, me lady," replied Barker, very superciliously, "only that he 'anded me y'r ledyship's card."

Here Barker laid a slip of pasteboard before Aunt Clarissa. She held it up close to her eyes and read her own name and address, and below, "Joseph Israels, dealer in curios and objets d'art."

"My dear Betty," cried out my aunt, "it is the man from Wardour Street. He has come after my 'Gustavus' vases. Show him in, Barker."

I wish with all my heart that I could rightly describe the ensuing interview. It would require the pen of a Congreve to do full justice to the situation. The dealer was big and burly, with a most unctuous voice and appealing manner; my aunt was small and delicate, with the sweetest flute-like tones and gentle demeanour; but she completely routed the Israelite without one quick word or haughty gesture.

He came to see, and, if possible, to procure the "Gustavus" vases, and as his desire to see them and to own them grew more apparent, my aunt's obstinacy increased in due ratio. She would not even show them to him, but while refusing, gave a most glowing description of them, their antiquity, history and fame. The poor dealer suffered tortures, and at length, goaded to desperation, offered ten guineas each for them, without having seen them. But Aunt Clarissa was not in the least abashed. She was gracious and smiling, but for all that she dismissed him and his twenty guineas with much decision.

"Twenty guineas indeed," she said to me after he had bowed himself away, a sadder and a wiser man. "Twenty fiddlesticks! if they are worth that to a man who has never laid eyes on them, they are worth twenty times as much to me."

A few more weeks went by and the man came again. This time, by a mistake, he was shown into the drawing-room, and when we entered he was fairly trembling with suppressed eagerness, as he hung over the little vases on the mantelshelf. As soon as he caught sight of us he rushed forward.

"Madam," he cried, "I offer you one hundred guineas each for these. No? You will not? One hundred and fifty, then? Two hundred? It is a fearful price, but I will give it. I *must* have these vases."

But Aunt Clarissa, not used to any such style of address, nor to having *must* applied to her in any form, drew her little figure up to its full height, obstinacy written in every line of face and form, and replied to him in words of quiet refusal. In vain I plucked at her dress and bade her consider. Two hundred guineas was so much money; all that Harry and I wanted for a nest egg; it would furnish the little cottage on which our hearts were set and leave a broad margin for a rainy day. But Aunt Clarissa was inexorable.

"Don't be a fool, Betty," she said, impatiently, withdrawing her dress from my imploring hand. "Why should I sell my 'Gustavus' vases? I do not think I shall ever do so. And when I do, sir," she added, turning to Mr. Israels, "it will not be for less than a thousand guineas each. I wish you good morning, sir."

Mr. Israels vanished, murmuring below his breath words the reverse of complimentary, and casting malevolent glances at my aunt. From that day I hated the very sight of the little vases; by much brooding they grew to represent to me Harry, our little longed-for home, our love and our happiness. Two hundred guineas was contained in their fat, puffy little shapes. Two hundred guineas! And as I looked at them, so fragile, so insensate, and thought of the little rose-covered cottage, and Harry, far away in the dreary, parched Crimea, with no prospect of wedded happiness, even if God spared him to me, I could have dashed the painted porcelain on the hearth and rejoiced to have heard it break into a thousand pieces. Mr. Israels came no more, and the vases stood unmolested on the drawing-room chimney-shelf.

I am sure, now, looking back on the past time, that I was not very kind or gentle to Aunt Clarissa after Mr. Israels' last visit. I shunned her, and stole away by myself, and shirked the small personal attentions it used to be my pleasure to bestow upon her. It had always been my habit to write her letters for her; she was very near-sighted, and much use of the pen was irksome; but now I never offered to help her. I felt bitter and hard and rebellious when I looked at her. She had seemed so cruel to me in the matter of the vases; and now she seemed equally indifferent to my neglect of her.

"Her ledyship do get a power of letters now-a-days, miss," said Barker one morning. "However she do manage to answer them all herself is beyond me. She never could, miss, if it weren't for that there analytical pencil."

"Oh, Barker," I cried, crossly, for I felt the covert reproof in her words, "why won't you learn to call things properly? It isn't an analytical pencil; I never heard of such a thing; it's an analine pencil, and I am sure Aunt Clarissa only uses it as a fad. It isn't any easier to write with."

"Oh, indeed! miss," sniffed Barker, and went off in a huff.

After this I did notice that Aunt Clarissa received each day a letter always addressed in the same hand. This letter she would study,

holding it close to her eyes, and cogitate over and meditate upon all the morning. After luncheon she would write an answer, which she would post herself after our early tea, always asking me very gently if I had any letters for the mail. Someone had given her a new pencil whose virtues I never cared to hear, and with this pencil she wrote her correspondence.

At last came the news of the Battle of Alma, and among the names of those slain Harry's name appeared.

God was very good to me. For a time my reason left me and I lay unconscious and without suffering. When at last I slowly returned to knowledge and to misery many weeks had passed. The tale was already a "twice told one," though so terribly new to me.

Aunt Clarissa had been very gentle to me and very kind, but I grieved to see how delicate and fragile she looked. She laughed when I spoke of it and said she should soon be all right again. One other thing I noticed : she received no more letters and wrote none. Her busy pencil hung unused upon her *châtelaine*.

When I rose from my bed of illness I tried to gather up all the little daily threads of my girl life, and to begin again the old routine. Thus I made my way to the drawing-room the first day I was fairly convalescent, and proceeded to dust all the old familiar objects.

Standing within the room a half comic recollection came over me : I recalled Mr. Israel's last interview with my aunt. After all, she was right. What good could the two hundred guineas do me now ? I turned mechanically to the chimney-shelf to salute the "Gustavus" vases, but their place was vacant. They were gone. I rushed in to Aunt Clarissa, duster in hand, and told her of my discovery.

"I know it, Betty," she said, rather drily. "I have sold them."

She would tell me no more. When, how, to whom, for how much ? These questions, thronging to my lips, were not to be answered. Aunt Clarissa had sold the "Gustavus" vases, but I was as ignorant of their fate as was Mr. Israel himself.

It was not very long after this that my poor Aunt Clarissa had a stroke of paralysis. It affected her right side, and rendered helpless that arm and hand. When I went to her she looked at me imploringly and whispered that I was not to mind ; "there was time yet, plenty of time." Then she tried to raise the poor, useless hand, and burst into piteous tears at her own affliction. She grew better in a day or two, but she never left her bed again, and we who nursed her could see a daily change for the worse. She was slowly but surely passing from us into the silent land.

One evening she had been quietly sleeping for several hours, and I was reading by the shaded lamp, when she suddenly called my name clearly and distinctly.

"Betty, Betty, come here."

I hurried to her. She was lying very still, her waxen face a little flushed, her sweet blue eyes eager and excited.

"Sit down," she said; "sit down, Betty. I must tell you about my 'Gustavus' vases."

I looked at her in astonishment. What in the world had those "Gustavus" vases to do with her in this midnight hour?

"Oh, don't trouble about the vases, Aunt," I said, soothingly. "I am sure you did all that was right about them."

"Don't be a fool, Betty," she answered with her old impatience; "I must tell you about them, for they are to be your legacy. I ought to have written it down properly when I could," she added, bitterly; "before I became useless. Well, Betty, I sold the vases as I told you; and my dear I was not humbugged. But I will tell you who was—Joseph Israels. I said I should not sell them for less than a thousand guineas each, and he laughed at me. He wrote to me every day for a month offering each time a little and a little more, until at last he named a sum only a hundred pounds short of my price."

"And of course you closed with him, Aunt."

"Of course I did nothing of the kind, Betty," she said, crossly. "I stole a march on Mr. Israels and gained my point. In his last letter he said he made me a final offer, as his Grace the Duke of Sandwich refused absolutely to give more. That was an unfortunate admission on Israels' part, Betty, for of course I wrote at once to the Duke and offered my vases at my own price, and he replied sending his cheque and saying he preferred purchasing from me than taking a pair offered him by Israels at just two hundred pounds more. Only to think of it, Betty: the wickedness of Mr. Israels offering *my* vases to the Duke at two hundred pounds more than my own price! It is lucky for you, Betty, that the Duke happens to be a fanatic over 'Gustavus' china, for the money, dear, is all for you; for your little nest egg; yours and Harry's."

"Oh, Aunt, Aunt," I cried, "I do not want it now. Harry is dead, and I have no use for any nest egg."

"Don't be foolish, Betty," she answered, very gently; "all the more reason you should have it. I cannot leave you anything else, as you know. The house and all it contains goes to Hetherington Mallery, and my annuity dies with me. But there is the two thousand guineas, Betty, and that shall be yours out and out; and with your own little income and Harry's you may be very comfortable."

Oh, why would she keep referring to Harry in this way as if he were alive and well?

"I will see to it, my dear; I will see to it," she added, presently. "You must write it down and help me sign it, or else the money will go into Hetherington Mallery's hands, and that would never do. Yes, I will see to it, Betty dear, but not now; I am rather tired. To-morrow, dear, to-morrow."

And to-morrow came the second warning. The doctor shook his head. "She cannot last very long, Miss Betty. One more stroke and she will go out, my dear; out like the snuff of a candle."

Alas ! the third came all too soon. But once more she rallied, and looking at me with eager, questioning eyes, made signs with her poor stricken fingers.

"Write," she gasped, "write what I told you—the vases—and the money to be yours—when I am gone—two thousand guineas, Betty—write—at once—quickly—then hold my hand—I will sign."

She was terribly excited, and to calm her I took up a bit of paper and a pencil and wrote down briefly the details and her wish. She followed my fingers with her eyes. When I had finished, I took her hand and guided it as she tried to write her name. I was bending close over her and so could follow each letter. It was a very trembling signature, but there was no mistaking it—Clarissa Mallery.

She dropped back on her pillows, and I folded the paper and put it in my pocket. As I did so she made a violent effort to raise herself.

"Don't—don't do that !" she cried out. "Leave—it—in—the light."

Then with a sudden, sharp cry, she sank back, and the poor twitching features told the sad truth all too well. Next morning Aunt Clarissa was dead, and I was utterly alone.

For the funeral came Mr. Hetherington Mallery, who walked about the old house and pretty grounds with an arrogant, possessorship air, and treated me as an interloper. The will was read in the drawing-room. Really there was no cause for a will, as all the property became his in any case, but Aunt Clarissa liked the dignity of seeming to bequeath it to him.

"I shall reside here immediately," Mr. Mallery said on the conclusion of the legal ceremony. "I trust, my dear Miss Blythe, you are not wholly unprovided for ; and will not—ah—feel the change from—ah—affluence to comparatively humble means."

"I shall feel leaving Aunt Clarissa's home," I replied, "if that is what you mean by affluence. But thanks to her love I am not unprovided for. She has left me two thousand guineas."

"Oh, indeed. I am very pleased I am sure. But—ah—pardon me, I see no mention of any such handsome legacy here," tapping the will with his long forefinger.

"For the very good reason, Mr. Mallery, that it is not there, but here," I answered, drawing from my pocket the paper Aunt Clarissa had signed, bestowing on me the value of the "Gustavus" vases. I had put the paper in my pocket the moment it was written, and there it had remained ever since.

I must confess I enjoyed a sense of triumph as I gave the details of my aunt's provision for me. Mr. Hetherington Mallery was not at all to my mind, and his manner of doubtful credulity irritated me greatly. When I had finished he said very blandly :

"Of course, my dear Miss Blythe, any desire of my late uncle's late wife, properly executed, would meet with instant acceptance by me.

But—ah—pardon me, your story is so very improbable, and—ah—two thousand guineas is so large a sum, you will not, I am sure—ah—object to my looking at the paper you mention.”

“You are more than welcome to look at it,” I cried. “You will not doubt Aunt Clarissa’s own signature, I suppose?”

I flung the paper unfolded upon the table. He smiled indulgently as he took it up and slowly opened it. As he did so, the smile upon his face changed to a perplexed expression, followed by an instantaneous look of pleasure as quickly concealed by one of much disappointment.

“My dear Miss Blythe—ah—I am very sorry, believe me—ah—there is some mistake. You could not, I am sure, jest upon so serious a matter, but—ah—this document cannot be the one to which you refer, since it is simply a *blank piece of paper*.”

“What!” I cried, catching it from him and scanning it eagerly. To my utter astonishment and bewilderment, not one trace of writing remained visible upon the surface of the paper. My own characters as well as Aunt Clarissa’s signature were gone.

In vain I speculated; in vain I searched my pocket, my desk, Aunt Clarissa’s *escritoire*, every possible or impossible place; no other such paper could be found, and there was no disputing the blank surface of the one I had produced in so much triumph. Mr. Mallery appeared to be exceedingly sorry, but I knew he secretly rejoiced. Doubtless Lady Clarissa had intended to so provide for me, but she was dilatory, as we all knew, and must have allowed intentions to stand for actions; my part in the matter he passed by unnoticed.

I took the paper and went up into my aunt’s bedroom. Here I threw it down upon the table open, and sat down to think out some possible solution of the mystery. It was a beautiful afternoon, and the sunshine fell full across the table on to the paper.

I recalled each incident of that night when Aunt Clarissa told me of the “Gustavus” vases; of her eagerness to have the paper written; of the trembling but perfectly legible signature—Clarissa Mallery—as soon doubt my own senses as doubt that. I remembered distinctly folding the paper and putting it into my pocket; to my certain knowledge it had never been taken thencefrom until I produced it for Mr. Mallery and found it a blank.

I forced myself to recall each trifling detail, and to do so more readily I went over to the bed and stood beside it as I had done on that night. Nothing had been changed in the room as yet. The table had been pushed on one side and the bottles and glasses removed, otherwise, my aunt’s little *souvenirs* lay untouched. There lay her bible, her salts, her spectacles, and beside the latter her pencil. I took it up mechanically, fingering it absently; it was the same I had used to write the paper. I half smiled, recalling Barker’s ridiculous name for it, “her ladyship’s analytical pencil.” It was in fact the analine pencil of which I had heard so much and heeded so little.



I walked back again to the table, still holding the pencil, and put out my hand to take up the paper. As I did so what was my astonishment to see on the blank surface the first few lines that I had written. Was I losing my reason? Had I brooded so long over the subject that my brain was giving way?

I bent down bewildered, confused. The sun shone full upon the paper, and as I gazed at it, one by one the letters reappeared in my own handwriting, until each sentence stood out clear and bold upon the white background. Yes, there it lay completed even to the signature, distinct though tremulous—Clarissa Mallery. I dared not take it; I dared not lift my eyes lest the writing should again disappear, leaving only a blank sheet of paper. As I stood I remembered suddenly Aunt Clarissa's struggle to stop me as I put the paper in my pocket and her broken, hurried words: "not there, not there; put it in the light."

What had she meant and why should my writing and hers appear and disappear in so magic-like a fashion? I still held the pencil, and as I thus meditated some words printed upon it caught my attention: "After using the pencil, expose to the light; the writing then becomes imperishable; but if not so exposed, or immediately put under cover, all traces of the writing will disappear and can only be recovered by strong sunlight."

Here was the mystery solved and Aunt Clarissa's warning cry explained. I had folded up the paper directly it was written, and in the dark recess of my pocket the characters had become obliterated.

Here then in Aunt Clarissa's own room, where through the light of her love she had provided for me, the light of God's sunshine returned her inheritance to me.

Mr. Hetherington Mallery paid over the legacy with as good a grace as he could assume; but he made no secret of his unbelief in the pencil, insisting that another document had opportunely turned up.

And Harry? Ah, well Harry did return to me. In those days many were the mistakes made in the "lists" and never rectified. He fought at Balaklava and was one of the few spared in that awful carnage. It was there he won his Victoria Cross and his promotion.

He is a grey-haired Colonel now, on the retired list, but he is the same Harry as of old. And no tale does he take such infinite delight in recounting as the story of Aunt Clarissa's "*Gustavus*" vases; concluding always with the telling peroration: "And this, my friends, is the analine pencil," which he wears dangling with his seals on his watch-chain.



## UNDER NORTHERN SKIES.

BY CHARLES W. WOOD, F.R.G.S., AUTHOR OF "THROUGH HOLLAND," &c.



ARMS OF COPENHAGEN.

TRAVELLING from Stockholm southwards you will find Sweden a very different country from Norway, which, very probably, you have recently visited. The great railway runs down from north to south like an immense, irregular backbone of iron; and I suppose it may be called the backbone of the Scandinavian trade. Hour after hour passes, and the scenery hardly ever varies. Norway is all mountains; Sweden is flat, though neither stale nor unprofitable. It is a land of

forests, lakes and rivers. You hardly ever come to a town or village or even a settlement; scarcely see a house. Immense solitudes, which, as far as one can tell, seem likely to remain so.

The wild, rugged, romantic beauty of Norway has disappeared. From Christiania to the North Cape you have nothing but a succession of marvels and surprises and overpowering impressions. But Sweden is so different that you grow weary of it; almost wonder what brought you there; feel almost sure nothing will take you there again. You think of "*Les Fourberies de Scapin*," and you also feel half inclined to exclaim: "*Que diable allait-il faire dans cette galère?*"

These Swedish plains and forests, these running rivers are delightful as a temporary sojourn, or even to possess as one's very own. Nothing can be more so. You revel in all the delights of the country; all rural sports; every influence that is morally and physically healthy. But merely to pass through them hour after hour, cribbed and confined in a prosy railway carriage—then it all grows very monotonous. The landscape is there certainly, but you hear neither the running of the waters, the song of the birds, nor the murmuring of the trees. Everything is drowned in the unromantic rush of the train.

So we were glad to leave it one dark night for a short sojourn at Jonköping. A storm was raging, the spirits of the air were abroad, the waters of great Lake Wetteren were tempest tossed. We could not see them, but we heard their dash against the railway embankment. Then, out of all this wilderness of darkness, came the pale rays of the lighthouse on the little pier. Next, the train steamed into the station.

We went out into the night. The darkness was Egyptian and might be felt. Nowhere any glimmer of lamp or lantern to help us on our benighted way. We stumbled and groped about as blind men. The hotel porter was with us, but there was something so mysterious and uncanny about the place that we felt as if going to our doom. Presently we entered a dark plantation of trees, and were sure of it. The very elements seemed against us as they tore about and bent and swayed the branches in mad fury. Rain fell in torrents. We could still hear the waters beating against the embankment. Two great red lights in the distance gleamed from the train, which had once more gone on its way: the fiery eyes of an evil monster rushing into space.

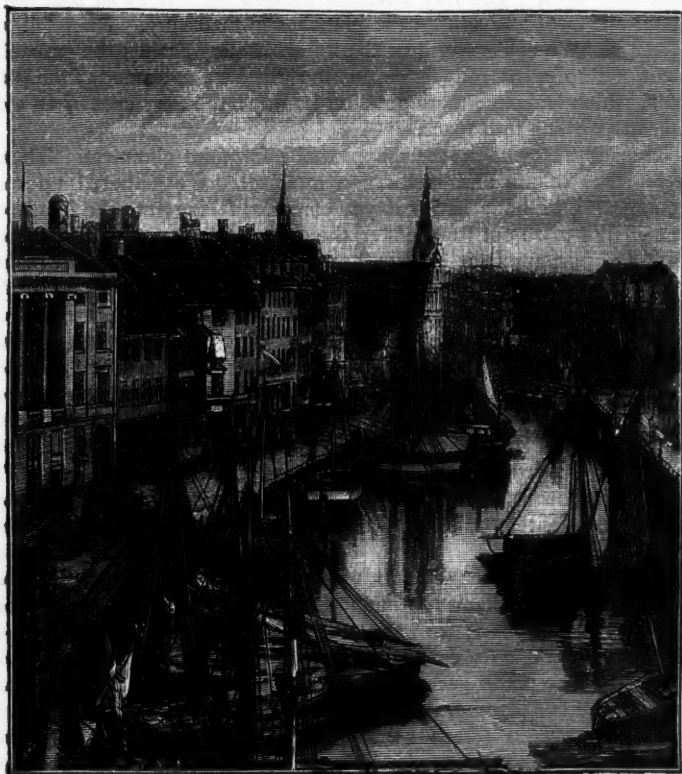
Presently, beyond the trees, appeared a few faint glimmers. There were signs of life and civilisation after all. We gathered up our courage. Our hour had not yet come for falling into the hands of men. We came out from under the trees; the sky was above us; dark and portentous, it is true, but still free and open. The wind raged and howled and tore about like demons of the air, but we faced it boldly. A great black mass loomed ahead; a door opened, just as if our approach had been heard in all this pandemonium of the elements, which would have drowned the very progress of a Salvation Army. We were glad to enter into shelter at any price, at all risks. The porter seemed master of the situation, and ordered his myrmidons about with a dignity which seemed to say he was sure of himself. Everyone obeyed him as a Lord Paramount of the place. We wondered how it was. Perhaps the owner of this great house was a widow, about to raise him to the dignity of her late lamented consort.

But we had nothing to do with that. Romantic histories and possible domestic dramas had no present charms for us. We had had a long, tiring journey; we were hungry and faint and weary; tantalising fumes and odours came creeping up the corridors from a far-off kitchen. The porter gave us rooms in which we felt more lost than ever. The two together would have formed a goodly-sized church. I think we counted fifteen windows in them. The atmosphere was sepulchral. Candles merely lighted up the darkness and threw ghostly shadows which made one's flesh creep. The wind outside rattled against the fifteen casements, and raged, and drowned our voices. Every now and then it sank to a momentary wail, like the sighing of a distressed spirit seeking admission, only to rise up again the next instant with seven-fold force. There was a piano in the room, black and upright as a sable sarcophagus. The elements inspired us and we sent forth a wild pæan in their honour, and woke echoes in the four corners of the chamber, harmonies and discords to which the winds bent a very fitting accompaniment.

But the dining-room below was brilliantly lighted and by no means deserted. The sparkling cup went round in small and separate

circles, for there were many tables and many parties. And they laughed and "quaffed the muscadel," and pledged each other in deep, deep draughts. And the howling of the winds outside, and the beating of the rain upon the windows seemed to lose their melancholy.

Next morning the scene had changed. We found that Jonköp-



COPENHAGEN.

ing by daylight was presentable and to be enjoyed. The storm had gone down, the sky was very blue, and the sunshine very bright and warm. The waters of the lake spread out before us had also ceased to rage. There was a small and very pretty harbour, and, at the end of the pier, the lighthouse that last night had flashed its rays into the Egyptian darkness. It was curious to find all these seaside marks and tokens so far inland. But these lakes are nothing less than small seas, and on rough days a steamer will launch out upon them as tempest tossed as if on the wide ocean, and with a motion

far more disagreeable and dangerous than any to be found on those wider waters.

Before the hotel was the canal which terminates its existence in Lake Wettern. Or rather there are large locks here which pre-



DANISH CHÂTEAU.

vent it from doing so. Thus Jonköping seems almost surrounded by water. This morning an excursion boat was getting up steam. It was crowded with people going off for a day's pleasure to Wisingsö, a small island on Lake Wettern some two or three hours distant. Flags abounded; a brass band enlivened the decks. The crowd

laughed and talked and seemed to be thoroughly enjoying life in their easy, careless fashion, living for the hour and the day. Few wants, small responsibilities, no anxieties; remembering and acting up to the old French song: "Donnez-moi vos vingt ans, si vous n'en faites rien." They make the most of all their years.

The decks were crowded and still they came, for it was Sunday. Then, at a given hour, the boat passed through the locks into the little harbour, between the piers, out on to the broad waters of the lake, which is some eighty miles long and fifteen miles broad. A grand shout from those on board and from those on shore as she parted from the land; a great display of handkerchiefs, and prolonged farewells, as if she had been going off to a new world and a new life. Then everyone scattered in a listless, leisurely manner, which seemed to say that the excursionists now on the broad lake had the best of it.

Jonköping is divided into two parts, the old and the new, and the canal may be said to separate one from the other. The new part of the town is more pretentious, less picturesque than the old. Long straight thoroughfares, built after a certain set plan and pattern; houses of stone, large and square, with gardens and murmuring trees about them as a redeeming feature. Public buildings, large and imposing, came in here and there with dignity and effect, proving that Jonköping in its way was thrifty and flourishing.

As indeed is the case. On your way to the new part, on the banks of the lake, you come to the manufactory of matches, which is a small settlement in itself, and gives work to an immense number of hands. To-day the place was closed, silence reigned, and no smoke came forth from the tall chimneys. On week-days it is equally closed to strangers, but there are signs and sounds of life in all quarters, and the quays are lined with bales and boxes of matches waiting to go out into the world, a large proportion of which find their way to England.

Jonköping also does a large trade in wood and iron and corn. There are ironworks in the neighbourhood, and you may walk out to some of them beside rushing streams and hurrying torrents. The surrounding country is very fertile, and yields large quantities of grain. So Jonköping has much in its favour, and many industries to bring it prosperity.

The old portion of the town is much more Scandinavian in appearance, more quaint and primitive, yet without any special feature for praise and recommendation. The houses are built of wood, and have the pleasant Swedish look all these wooden towns possess.

We entered the church, where service was going on. A long sermon was being patiently and devotionally listened to, but as one of us at least had "no Swedish" we quietly went out again. There were shady trees about the church, and a few people were seated on the benches beneath them, possibly reading *their* sermon in



the stones and rustling leaves. Only a few yards beyond, the blue waters of the lake plashed warmly and lazily against the embankment. This large inland sea to-day was full of beauty and kindness, and to it Jonköping owes much of its attraction. But beyond the town and the canal are hills rising, which also add their charm to the scene. Hills musical with running waters and rich in pine forests. Jonköping we could fancy a very pleasant place for a long sojourn. There is plenty of fishing and other sports in the neighbourhood, numberless excursions far and near, but for a flying visit a day seems almost sufficient to give to it.

For ourselves we came to it in darkness, and we left it in darkness. But it greeted us with storm and tempest, dismissed us with calm. The sky was clear, the stars gave us their benediction.

Again on a certain day, or rather night, we found ourselves travelling southward from Stockholm. As long as daylight lasted it was always the same description of scenery; and when daylight returned, still it was the same. Flat, endless pastures and forests, with now and then a river or lake to break the monotony. Immense tracts of country pleasant to look upon, but never raising one to enthusiasm or the smallest excitement.

At four in the morning we stopped at a small station, where a few sleepy travellers turned out eagerly for coffee and rolls. They all looked more or less as if they had seen a ghost or suffered from nightmare. The human form when abroad on its travels at four in the morning is not at its best. The lords of creation are then hardly in a condition to assert their supremacy. But they have the consolation of knowing that the ladies of creation would present a still sorrier figure if they would only show themselves.

We had been up since two o'clock, surveying Nature from the open stage outside the sleeping car; watching the sun rise, the dews disperse, the gradual awakening in this world of still life, through which the train rushed like a whirlwind, raising clouds of blinding, provoking dust. We were not taken at a disadvantage; some people never are; and were ready and grateful for the coffee and rolls, which put new life into one and were worth their weight in gold. The damsels who supplied them seemed veritable ministering spirits. The sleepy travellers stumbled back to their uneasy couches for a little more sleep and a little more slumber; we returned to our stage, and the train went on.

Presently we came to Lund, the second University town in Sweden, which has had a great and flourishing past, and was a Bishopric in the twelfth century. It is in the midst of a wide, uninteresting, but fertile plain, through which we traced the long course of a winding river. Not far from the station the cathedral rose conspicuously above the houses of the town. It looked interesting, and made us half wish we had broken our journey here. But the train passed on,

and we with it, and at last reached Malmö, where the steamer starts for Copenhagen.

Again it was Sunday. For it is not always possible in travelling: especially in these northern latitudes where trains and boats are not very frequent, and where you perhaps have a dozen "correspondences" in a long journey: to make Sunday a day of rest. We soon found to our cost that it was anything but a day of rest here.

Malmö itself is a busy seaport, given over to trade and shipping. It is situated on the Sound running between it and Copenhagen, which



TOWN HALL, COPENHAGEN.

is about sixteen miles across. Its long quays, full of merchandise and timber, are bustling and noisy enough on week-days, but to-day were free from work. Yet in the broad, hot sunshine it looked lively and interesting, after the manner of all docks and harbours filled with shipping, all signs and tokens of the rare happiness and freedom of ocean life.

The steamer for Copenhagen was crowded with people going over for the day. There was scarcely standing room on board, and one hesitated about adding to the multitude. But Malmö is hardly the place to linger in, even for a day, unless you have special reason for doing so. Moreover, after a long and tiring journey of sixteen or seventeen hours, one longed for such a resting place as would alone

be found in Copenhagen. In Malmö there was nothing to detain or attract. It is famous as having once held Bothwell, the husband of Mary Queen of Scots, who was imprisoned here, and subsequently died in Denmark ; but all its old fortifications have disappeared, and nothing remains but the old castle.

The journey across to Copenhagen occupies about an hour and a half. To-day the sea was as a sea of glass. It ran up between the lands, and flashed and glittered in the sunshine of one of the hottest days that had been known for years. This made no difference to the



THEATRE ROYAL, COPENHAGEN.

crowd on board, who seemed to revel in it. Smoking was universal, so were laughing and talking ; "a merry band of brothers," knit together by the common interest and attraction of enjoyment and making the most of a summer holiday ; *ces beaux jours de la vie*, when all the world is young.

We had land in sight all the way, and, as far as possible, enjoyed the run across. The approach to Copenhagen was most imposing. It appeared what it really is, a fine and flourishing capital. The steamer passed down amidst a crowd of shipping, endless quays, one landing stage after another. Here and there a man-of-war lying at anchor, looked like a great yacht on pleasure bent rather than a vessel meant for battle. The officers in white trousers were evi-

dently the essence of coolness and infinite enjoyment. Life on board must be very pleasant. The steeples and towers of Copenhagen rose conspicuously above its houses, and, as we approached, there was a sound of bells in the air.

At length the steamer reached the landing stage. There was a crowd of porters on shore; a long black shed which served as a Custom House; a string of carriages behind for hire. Some of the porters came on board, and one of them seizing our luggage, disappeared like a flash of lightning. We followed to the best of our ability. He made off with it in such a manner that anyone might have fancied he belonged to the Society of Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves. We lost sight of him, but making for the Custom House, behold at the door he came down upon us as an eagle to its prey. He must have been an observant man too, for though we knew him not, he had not the slightest doubt about us.

The place was full of luggage. We had thought ourselves almost the only passengers on board and now found out our mistake. The Custom House people were as fussy and careful as the French are in their examinations; insisted upon going to the bottom of everything; marked off each package with a bit of chalk. Without this charm, handbags and everything else were turned back at the door.

Finally we were free, and rolling in an open droschke through the town. But we have a conscious feeling that this sounds far more grandly than it looked. Words, it is said, were given to us to conceal our thoughts, and with the best intentions in the world it is not always possible to place an exact picture before the reader's eye. Nevertheless it is certain that we were rolling in an open droschke through the town. We had a pair of horses to our carriage, and a coachman in livery. We will pass over the appointments in silence; the reader will kindly imagine them perfect.

From the first moment, you are enlisted in favour of Copenhagen. It is well built and bright, and almost reminds one of a small Paris or Brussels. That you are in neither one nor the other is evident by the names over the doors and the unfamiliar tongue spoken around you.

It is equally certain that you are not in Sweden. There is a great difference between Sweden and Denmark, though in times past they have been so intimately connected, and though they are so very close to each other. A subtle change has come over everything; you hardly know in what it consists. About the Danes themselves there is more animation than about the Swedes. They are lighter; freer in their movements; quicker in perception if you converse with them. They are better looking, and in many ways resemble the English. They possess their own peculiar and distinct type, and it is a very good type. They are well built, yet slight, as a race, with well-carved features and pleasant expressions. They are very prepossessing; and seeing that this applies to the middle classes generally, it is found

to a greater degree in the higher grades. After seeing much of Denmark one ceases to marvel at the peculiar charm and beauty of the Princess who dwells amongst us, and who is at once so Danish and so English.

Once clear of the steamer and the quay we found ourselves in comparative quiet, for as it was Sunday the shops were closed and the streets were in peace. There was a Sunday air, an English and familiar look about Copenhagen. We felt that we should like it, and that a sojourn here would be very pleasant. It was a peculiarly bright day, and the heat, we have already said, was tropical.

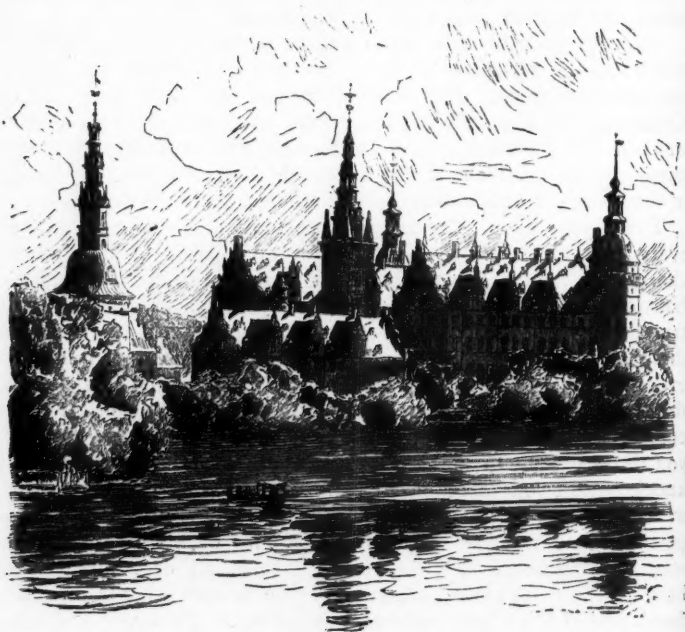
We were glad to come to an anchor at the Hotel d'Angleterre, which has the reputation of being the best in Denmark and one of the best in Europe. It is also well situated on the chief square of Copenhagen, facing the Royal Theatre and other fine buildings. A tramway runs through the square, and a stream of foot passengers constantly passing to and fro make it very animated. Anyone wishing to indulge in the Pleasures of Melancholy must forswear these quarters.

The houses about Copenhagen are most of them modern, but every now and then you come upon an ancient building which charms you the more that it is a rare discovery. Under many of the houses are cellars, which are turned into fruit shops, tempting and tantalising. Up the steps and through the open, wide-winged doors there comes forth a scent of raspberries and strawberries well nigh irresistible. The fruit is also cunningly displayed in rich heaps, and the announcement of "Strawberries and cream" in very best Danish completes your downfall. You look around; no one is coming; you throw dignity to the winds and go down. At the bottom you knock against your last night's neighbour at the table d'hôte. You were then both of you as sensible and reasonable and dignified as possible; had nothing to do with frivolities of life; were strong-minded, philosophical, metaphysical. It is all over now. You have discovered a mutual weakness; gaze at each other in a shame-faced sort of way; look guilty and found out. Then you make the best of it and laugh. Your neighbour, who has been wanting a second plate all the time, but would not ask for it, takes heart of grace, goes back, and has it with you. Stolen pleasures are sweet.

Opposite to one of these cellars was the Round Tower, dating back to the year 1642. It is 115 feet high, and a winding roadway between the outer wall and the inner cylinder, a broad, spiral inclined plane, takes you up to the summit. Up this went the Empress Catherine of Russia, in 1716, in a carriage and four, preceded by Peter the Great on horseback. And up it we went in 1885, but without carriage or mounted herald. But we did there what probably Catherine did not do: we had just been to the post office, and on that height, overlooking the whole town and the surrounding country, we opened and read a budget of home letters that would have soothed the heart even of an empress.



The view from the top is as fine as Copenhagen can furnish. The whole town lies mapped before you, with all its churches and museums and famous buildings. You can see that it is built upon two islands, and on all sides are the blue waters sparkling in the sunshine. There are long, pale reaches of water afar off, and quays and harbours near at hand crowded with shipping. To-day, Sunday, all flags are flying, and the vessels and the water are lively and exhilarating. Far away across the Sound stretch the long, flat shores



FREDERIKSBORG CASTLE.

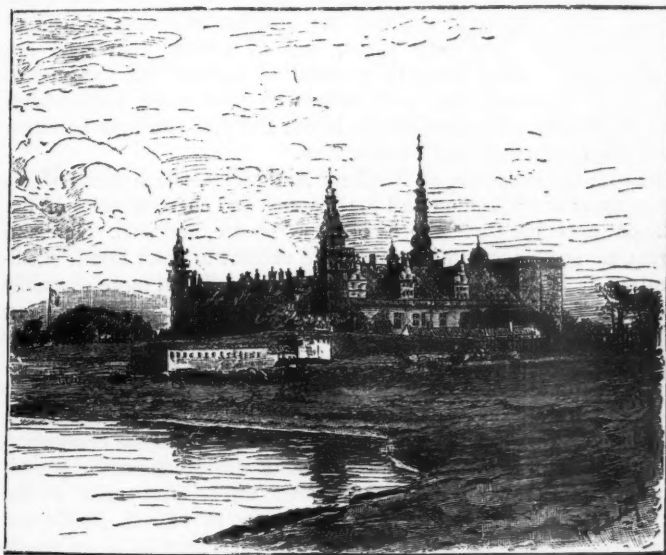
of Sweden, a faint line almost lost in the hazy distance. You look again and again to see whether it is really land, or only a long, thin, vaporous cloud in the sky, or merely the horizon itself.

Across there, on a small island, surrounded by the harbour, is Christianborg Palace, built and destroyed and rebuilt several times over in the last seven hundred years. The present one, restored in 1828, has never been a royal residence, but is a fine edifice with magnificent rooms, and much that is worth notice in the way of sculpture and decoration. Farther away, in a different direction, lies Klampenborg, one of the watering places to be visited from Copenhagen. A short railway journey takes you to it. Here you may spend the day, and dine very pleasantly at one of the restaurants, and observe life as



it is found at a Danish seaside resort. The bathing in that warm, blue, sparkling sea is excellent, and you begin to think there are attractions here scarcely to be found in Copenhagen itself.

But Copenhagen is rich in many things. Thorvaldsen's Museum alone is a treasure, containing many of the works of the great sculptor, and many models of his works. In the centre of a Pompeian-like court Thorvaldsen himself finds his last resting place. A flat stone covered with ivy, surrounded by a marble border, marks the grave. It is a curious idea, and yet one easily entered into, perhaps with sympathy. He lies in the centre of the great city, his home for many



KRONBORG CASTLE.

years, amidst the people he loved and who loved him and did him homage. Everyone who enters his museum pays the tribute of a visit to his grave, where you almost seem to realise his presence. And here you find not only much of his work, but many of the pictures and other objects of art that he collected during his lifetime and bequeathed to the city.

You cannot help lingering in this museum. If you are staying long in Copenhagen you return to it over and over again. You revel in the work of the sculptor, his vivid imagination, powers of conception, designs at once chaste and vigorous. An atmosphere of beauty and refinement about the place charms the mind and seduces one: not by the voice, like the Sirens of Caprea who lured their victims into the blue waters of the Mediterranean by the power of

Song : but by the almost equally seductive power of Form. You could wish that there was more of Thorvaldsen's actual work and less of facsimile in the way of models ; nevertheless you are so influenced by the collection that it becomes inseparable with your memories of the capital. A refinement of thought and feeling, which somehow seems to be communicated to the people, who possess both outwardly and in themselves a good deal of natural grace.

Copenhagen is also rich in other museums. The Ethnographical Museum and the Museum of Northern Antiquities are full of interest and are scarcely to be surpassed. The former is a museum of comparison, showing the difference between savage tribes and civilisation. More especially it shows the progress and development of civilisation from very early times, and in nations that were not Scandinavian. Days would be required to exhaust the treasures of the numerous rooms, and only those who have some acquaintance with the subject can appreciate the labour and skill and time bestowed upon their selection and classification.

So with the collection of Northern Antiquities, which again shows the progress of civilisation and the features and characteristics of the different ages: the three epochs of stone, bronze, and iron. Here also it requires some acquaintance with the subject to enter into it intelligently. It is a study in itself, interesting to all, but more especially to the geologist and the Antiquarian. This collection is the largest in the world, and is especially rich in its display of gold ornaments.

From room to room you may trace all the periods and transitions. You pass from the age of rough stone to that of polished ; from the age of bronze to the age of iron. You come to the room of Runic stones, which brings you up to the tenth century and the commencement of the middle ages, finally reaching the Renaissance period. These latter rooms with their treasures will appeal most to the ordinary visitor, who will find more beauty in carved shields and ivory ornaments, silver altars and jewelled cups, than in brazen vessels and pagan monuments. An interesting object in the collection was the watch of Tycho Brahe, the Astronomer, ancestor of the present owners of Skokloster and its art treasures. It almost seems as if this watch also ought to be amongst them. Large and curious, it marks the progress that has been made in things not formed of stone, or bronze, or iron.

Copenhagen is not rich in churches as far as their beauty is concerned. The chief one is the Vor Frue Kirke, a modern edifice of Roman architecture. A well-proportioned building, plain and simple, but rich in possessing the figure of our Saviour at the altar, which Thorvaldsen, it is said, considered his masterpiece.

Down the church are the twelve Apostles, six on either side. Every one is a study in itself, a work of wonderful vigour and beauty. You almost feel as if gazing upon sculpture for the first time. It is life petrified into stone.

A feeling of devotion runs through all. In the figure of our Saviour the spiritual influence has been so well caught by the great-minded workman that you seem to be looking upon the more than human. No other sculptor has ever succeeded so well in this most important element. One almost feels that Thorvaldsen, like Fra Angelico, must have worked upon his knees, and that his mind undoubtedly was in a frame of deepest devotion. He must have had the utmost reverence for his subject as well as love for his work.

The very simplicity of the church, the plain walls perfectly unadorned, add very much to the effect of these sculptures. Entering from the west end you are at once struck and arrested by the figure at the far east, which seems to be pronouncing upon you the benediction of the Good Shepherd. You have suddenly passed from the noisy traffic of the streets into a world of absolute rest. It appears almost like the living representation of the scene that took place eighteen centuries ago. A moment since you were in the noisy, turbulent pulses of the world, now you are in a great calm, and almost fancy you hear once again the words, "Peace, be still," that for eighteen hundred years have so deeply stirred all hearts. As with Thorvaldsen's museum, if you are making any stay in Copenhagen you will insensibly be drawn to this church over and over again, will study these works, and love them the more the oftener they are seen.

Most beautiful also is the group of St. John preaching in the wilderness, over the portico of the west front. Every figure here is again a study of extreme grace and beauty impossible to be surpassed. There are other subjects within the church, such as the Angel of the Font; but none of it can be realised by a mere description. A church existed here as far back as the twelfth century, but it was destroyed in the eighteenth. Then another of great magnificence arose in its place, which was destroyed by the English when they besieged Copenhagen at the beginning of this century and half ruined it.

The town as it exists to-day has a bright and animated look, partly due perhaps to the clear atmosphere and the blue of the sky. The houses are tall and straight, something like those of Paris or Vienna. Some of the shops are very good, and most conspicuous and attractive are those which display the Danish porcelain and hand-painted pottery, and the pure, chaste models, on a reduced scale, of Thorvaldsen's works.

Canals run through some of the thoroughfares, often crowded with shipping, adding very much to the liveliness of the town, and giving it occasionally a Dutch-like appearance. Especially is this the case in front of the Exchange: a large, long building of considerable attraction, in the Dutch Renaissance style, built in the seventeenth century but recently restored. The spire is curiously formed by the bodies and tails of four dragons or serpents twisted together, with heads turned downwards to the four points of the compass. Here,

with this building on the one hand, and the canal with its shipping and bustling quays on the other, you might almost fancy yourself in Holland.

Copenhagen both in itself and its neighbourhood is rich in palaces, but they cannot be described in our present limits. All should be visited, for all possess special points of attraction. In one of the parks is a statue of Hans Christian Andersen, whose charmingly ugly face seems to be smiling benignantly upon the world of youth, of whom he will ever be the delight. But a smiling mood was not always his to enjoy. We know that he was troubled with a sensitiveness and self-consciousness that almost amounted to vanity, inclined him to morbid moods and seasons, and a certain irritable impatience which must have caused him much suffering and sorrow. It could not be otherwise with an organisation so delicate, a mind and imagination so pure. In perfect harmony with youth and innocence, possessing the spirit of a child with the thoughts of maturity he was out of harmony with all the rough and disenchanting influences of the grown-up world around him. He lived in a world of his own, and was unfitted to come into contact with any other. His own world was Fairy-land; all sunshine and pathos and magic. What bond of union could such a spirit find in a world of realities? His body lies in a churchyard not very far off, but his soul has taken flight to those regions where alone it could find the food and companionship it needed; innocence of youth, eternal sunshine, the delights of a Fairy-land beyond all he ever imagined.

But Copenhagen possesses other influences than those which bring out one's better thoughts and feelings. Its most popular rendezvous is Tivoli, which on summer nights when the trees are pleasantly "umbrageous" is crowded by the inhabitants. It is a famous place with all sorts of attractions. Excellent bands indoors and out of doors; small theatres, whose pieces and acting do not call for unqualified praise; performing dogs and dancing bears; an electric railway; all kinds of amusements which, if harmless enough, have that air of *abandon* and frivolity which is not of the healthiest description. But as water will not rise above its own level so the amusements supplied meet the demand. The mind and moods of man are not always in a state of exaltation; perhaps the greater part of them know nothing of aspirations or ever dream of "rising on stepping stones of their dead selves to higher things."

So night after night and year after year Tivoli is crowded and popular. And if the amusement took an elevating turn and went in for pictures, taste, Shakespeare, and the musical glasses, its winding walks, and shaded alleys, and miniature islands would soon be left to the bats and the owls.

There are innumerable excursions from Copenhagen, far and near. Its quays crowded with steamers are not the least interesting of its walks. These steamers will take you to all parts of the world. You

may go round the coast of Sweden, either up the Cattegat or through the Baltic, touching at all sorts of interesting places. You may visit the different islands of the Baltic, and so often come upon almost untrodden ground. When we found ourselves in the island of Bornholm, with all its beauty and attraction, I was the only Englishman there, or who had been there for some time.

So was it again in Gotland: that wonderful place, with its crowd of ruins gilded by flashing skies and glowing sunsets: the town of Wisby, which has no rival, yet is so little known.

A long sojourn may be passed very pleasantly in Copenhagen, with all sorts of changes and varieties for many days. At the Hotel d'Angleterre you will find yourself in excellent quarters. The house is well conducted, light, and cheerful. The table d'hôte is good, and after it you may take your coffee in the covered courtyard, and admire the trailing creepers and the decorated walls. You must have a little patience with the waiters, who are slow, and in the breakfast room a little too much left to themselves. But where will you find absolute perfection? Not in this lower world, and not this side the millennium.

There are certain places which attract you at once, just as there are certain people. You hardly know why or wherefore, and it is sometimes lost labour to try to analyse the feeling. It was so with Copenhagen, and we should always return to it with a feeling of pleasure. For Sweden we have no such sentiment; but the very sound of Norway again stirs up thoughts, and feelings, and emotions, that if we were æsthetic we should call "intense," but as happily we are not, we will leave the reader to imagine for himself. Whatever is to him most delightful: whatever exhilarates him and raises from his shoulders the load of daily life and the accumulated memories of sin and suffering and sorrow; the anguish of heart known only to himself; the sleepless pillow and the sick awakenings: whatever causes him to forget all these and for a moment raises him to dreams of happiness and a sense of freedom for which language has no word, such to us is the very sound of Norway.

But we are wandering from our subject, even as we must now wander from Copenhagen. Not up the Cattegat towards the iron-bound shores of the midnight sun, but the other way, into the Baltic.

It was a glorious evening when we bid a temporary farewell to Copenhagen, and steamed through the crowd of shipping down the long, striking, and picturesque harbour. Steered past flat reaches, where old and picturesque windmills were conspicuous, towards the flat shores of Sweden, and passed into the open sea on our way to the Island of Bornholm.

## GUDRUN.

TRANSLATED FROM THE GERMAN BY MAJOR NORTH, R.A.

NOW lovingly caressed and anon fiercely buffeted by the waves of the Baltic, between the coasts of Pomerania and Sweden, lies the Danish island of Bornholm. It is little known to the world; and the profusion of wild roses indigenous to the place has acquired for it the sobriquet of the Isle of Roses.

The environs of the little town of Allinge, on the North West, are especially picturesque and remarkable for the peculiar wildness of their formation. We are here, suddenly, and without any prelude, confronted with a magnificent natural panorama.

Behind us stretches the vast and gloomy expanse of the plateau; before us a chaos of weird forms modelled in solid rock—and the boundless horizon. But even here the poetry of romance weaves its magic web, for the venerable ruins of Hammershuus Castle look down upon us from an eminence, as if inviting the wayfarer to rest and dream awhile within its mossgrown walls.

Making Allinge my starting-point I used often to visit the old Castle. The road at first lies along the strand, then winding to the left commences an ascent; after half an hour spent in scrambling amongst rocks, the "Vale of Paradise" is attained. Through the heart of the dell, encircling the castle, extends a promenade whose perfection of scenery challenges imagination itself. The path on both sides is bordered with lilacs and roses in thick hedges, which grow to a sufficient height to form a species of vaulted alley, rich in fragrance, retaining its grateful shade and coolness during the prevalence of extreme heat. Birds make melody in the thicket; insects float upon the breeze with a somnolent susurrus; golden sunbeams, quivering upon the verdant foliage, glide down upon the blossoms which strew the ground; giant ferns seem to wave their fans with a dreamy motion.

A few paces through this Eden brings the wanderer before the deep, placid languor of the ocean. Masses of rock cleft in rugged wildness form at once a small bay and a fitting frame for so glorious a prospect.

I sought my favourite haunt one day when the fierce heat of the sun's rays was untempered by a breath of air; but the rough-hewn bench under the gnarled oak, whence the view extended to the distant sea commanding the course of passing ships, was occupied.

A girl busied with needlework was sitting there. In my first surprise I fancied that I beheld some apparition or wood nymph. It was, however, no "unreal mockery," for the figure arose to its feet



when my footsteps became audible. Standing there in all her marvelous beauty, in a flood of sunbeams, she resembled some goddess of the Northern mythology. The garb of the country developed freely the graceful symmetry of her tall, slender figure, and lent a peculiar charm to her appearance. The most striking feature in this vision was, however, the nobly modelled head, the expressive countenance encircled by a profusion of light, waving hair, the eyes shaded by dark lashes, blue and fathomless as the ocean, their gaze now fixed upon the intruder.

We stood silent for a moment, confronting each other in mutual surprise, for neither of us had dreamt of finding this solitude invaded by another human being. Should I pass on my way placidly, or seek to enter into conversation? I hesitated. Every form of address which first occurred to me seemed bold and inappropriate; I should have preferred to content myself with gazing at her and listening to her voice. As it was necessary, however, to put an end to the situation one way or another, and vainly endeavouring to combat the ascendancy of the girl's charms, I enquired my way to the little fishing village of Vang, which I had long intended to visit.

"Ah, you speak Danish," she observed, with a friendly smile, for she had at once set me down as a foreigner. And then, with all the charm of natural affability which characterises her compatriots, she explained that the way led me across the rocky strand. I noted anew in her a peculiarity of the Bornholm folk: avoiding all use of the expression right or left, they refer invariably to the points of the compass. She accompanied me to a point from which I could not miss my way and wished me "a pleasant walk" at parting. This meeting gave me food for reflection during the rest of my ramble.

What had caused me to take so much interest in this girl? Surely not her rare beauty alone. I pondered and pondered, and at length believed I had found a clue. I had a dim recollection of some tragic feature in her face, such as nature bestows in many human beings, and now my mind's eye descried it clearly and distinctly defined in the graceful lines of her mouth. Besides this, her eyes had a gaze full of dreamy thoughtfulness, as though the soul of their possessor dwelt in the far distance. At all events this maiden had something unusual about her.

At Vang I entered the cabin of a fisherman to partake of refreshment, as there was no inn there, and mentioned my encounter; asking, after giving a description of the girl, if anybody knew her. At once came the reply: "Of course; that was our lovely Gudrun; everybody in the island knows her. A good girl—but *klarsynet* (a clairvoyante), which, however, is not unusual amongst our women."

"Ah!" thought I—"a clairvoyante! That accounts for the dreamy look in her eyes." And the weather-beaten sailor added:

"She has occasioned her father, old Captain Torstensen, much grief already from this cause. She wanders at night to the ruins of

Hammershuus and talks with the spirits there. But she will be married soon. She is engaged to Gunnar, the pilot, who is due home shortly in the Russian East Indiaman, the *Nautilus*."

On my departure the old man refused my proffer of remuneration, convincing proof of the hospitality of the islanders. He accepted, however, a few cigars, thanking me heartily with a grip of the hand which I felt for some days after.

My interest in the girl increased. Did she really then possess the gift of second sight? And how did it find vent? Musing over this I set out on my return.

Thinking to shorten my journey I took a by-path. When I reached the old Castle, night had already fallen. I found that I had lost my way, and was soon utterly at fault. I wandered about amongst the rocks for a good hour, and at last in the distance descried a light which I made my beacon. It led me to an isolated house. I knocked with the intention of asking the way. The door was opened, and before me stood—my beautiful acquaintance of the afternoon.

This second meeting so surprised me that I was at first unable to utter a word. At last I explained my dilemma to Gudrun, who kindly invited me to enter. It was her father's house. The latter, a tall man of fifty, easily recognisable as a sailor who had seen much of the world, gave me a friendly reception, set some refreshment before me, and proposed to accompany me until I should regain my road. Thus, for the second time, I had asked the way of Gudrun. She referred to this herself with some graceful jest which lent a fresh charm to her naturally thoughtful countenance.

After this our meetings were more frequent; sometimes at the house of her father, who at times accompanied me in my rambles, sometimes walking near the old Castle. One day we visited the ruins in company. We clambered about over the ancient walls, Gudrun proving herself an entertaining guide. She was well acquainted with the history of the Castle, which had been the ancient stronghold of Bornholm.

It was another lovely afternoon. Long films of gossamer floated in the air; the sea rose and fell with a gentle motion. We stood upon a crumbled wall of the Castle, absorbed in contemplation of the indescribable beauties of the scene. Around us fragrant roses entwined with ivy.

Suddenly Gudrun turned to me and asked:

"Do you believe in presentiments, and in revelations of the future?"

She uttered the words hurriedly, and apparently after an internal struggle.

"I might almost do so," I answered; "for I have known men who possessed the unhappy gift of foreseeing their destiny, and this was always of a mournful kind."

I had never made any mention to Gudrun of the information which had been imparted to me at Vang with reference to her peculiarity.

"Truly an unhappy gift!" she repeated. "I also possess it, and

when the spirit of prevision overcomes me, a veil seems to be torn from my eyes, and in the boundless future I see nothing but misfortune."

I knew not what to reply.

"Look, yonder!" she cried suddenly, in a sharp, strange voice, pointing in the direction of Allinge, whilst her vision seemed strained upon some far off point: "a stranded ship; foaming waves. He is calling—he is calling! Yes, Gunnar, I come, I come!"

And she made a movement as though she would hurry away from the spot. I held her firmly by the arm, and turning my eyes in the direction indicated saw nothing but the azure sky and the placid surface of the sea.

"Ah, it was a vision," sobbed the girl. "I am so unhappy! Oh, I know that I shall die soon. This is the third time that I have seen it. They are calling me, the spirits of the deep. But come; evening is closing in and you must not lose your way again."

I accompanied her to the house, striving to dispel her dismal forebodings. But she only shook her head thoughtfully. At her door she turned. "Good-night, and au revoir," she said, looking mournfully at me; and I took my leave, strangely affected by her mood.

The day breaks dull and tempestuous. Dark clouds are scudding athwart the sky. On the sea the storm rages in uncertain gusts. The waters rise up and lash themselves in fury, and long foam-crested chains of mountain billows hurl with a mighty crash against the rock-bound coast. The island seems to tremble to its very foundations. "God protect our mariners," is the thought of every islander. My room in Mardier's commands a view of both sea and town. The latter is a small place built upon the strand. The streets are deserted as the rain descends in torrents.

The storm increases to a hurricane. In the harbour, sea-mews fly hither and thither uttering discordant cries which are drowned in the roar of the tempest, the thunder of the waves.

So pass morning and afternoon. The hurricane still rages with unabated vehemence. The lantern is already alight in the neighbouring lighthouse at Hammerberg. Several fishermen are busy in the harbour trying to make their boats, which are dancing about like nut shells, more secure from risk of injury.

But hark! A dull, brief report resounds above the din of the tempest and the turmoil of the waters. This is no thunder of the waves; it is a cannon shot. We hear it once more, and then repeated at shorter intervals. Men congregate at the harbour's mouth, and a large telescope is procured. But no ship is yet visible; the horizon is too circumscribed. Thus half an hour passes away. All Allinge is on the alert. People unite in groups to discuss the plight of the devoted vessel. I find myself attached to one of these knots. Now—it may be about five o'clock—something black becomes visible against

the background of Hammerberg. It draws nearer and becomes plainer—we distinguish a ship.

A sudden flash quickly followed by a report gives a renewed intimation that the vessel is in distress. But who can render any aid? The coast is precipitous, and wild, uneven crags jut out far into the ocean. The sea is so rough that no boat could live in it. The danger becomes more and more imminent. The craft, a brig already bereft of its mainmast, must strike. It is hopelessly lost.

In the excitement of the awful moment I had been unconscious as to my immediate surroundings. Suddenly, quite close to me, I heard a cry full of despair, a soul-stirring wail.

It was Gudrun who stood wringing her hands, her fallen tresses a prey to the blast. "The *Nautilus*—Gunnar!" she cried in her anguish. "Save him—my love!"

The doomed ship was none other than that which bore her betrothed homewards. Men ran to and fro with confused cries, but no one ventured to the rescue. "It would only be tempting Providence," declared a venerable sailor; and he added, uncovering his head in all reverence: "The Lord of Heaven and Earth deliver them." All the bystanders followed his example and united in the prayer.

Gudrun rushed from group to group, imploring, supplicating, wringing her hands, but nobody ventured to court certain death.

Suddenly Captain Torstensen, her father, appeared upon the scene, wearing a "Sou'-wester" and long sea-boots.

"Who will come with me?" he asked, in a clear, resonant voice. He met with no response. Some attempted to dissuade him from his enterprise, even resorting to force. The most experienced sailors regarded it as madness to attempt to navigate in such a sea.

"Then I shall try it alone," he declared, hurrying towards his boat. Two young men followed him, at first doubtfully; then, adjoined by Gudrun, determined to join him in the desperate venture.

A rush was made for the landing where the boats were lying. Torstensen could scarce stand upright in his boat, but for all that he cast off the painter. And now, just as the men were in the act of pushing off, Gudrun leapt into the boat. A cry of terror rose from a hundred throats. Many women were weeping. The boat heeled over and the oarsmen were evidently striving to put back with Gudrun. A receding wave, however, carried the boat rapidly out of the harbour.

The crowd stood breathless; not a word was spoken. All eyes were centred on the boat, which appeared on the lofty summit of a wave only to disappear next moment in the trough of the sea. Gudrun's fair locks were floating in the wind like a cloud fleck. The minute guns had long ceased to echo from the brig.

Darkness set in, and they had not returned. Nothing further was seen of the ship. Night fell. The storm raged on, the waves still

battled fiercely, and out yonder those who were meeting their doom drew their last breath unheard.

Unheard? No. There is One who listens and hears.

The people of Allinge passed a sleepless night. As for me, I pondered over Gudrun's words of the previous day: "Do you hear? Oh, I know I shall die soon!"

Once more day dawned, but the morning was bright and sunny. The storm had subsided. Men were searching the shore. All that remained of the brig was a shattered wreck wedged in between the rocks. Here and there a body was lying drowned on the beach. Gudrun's father lay amongst these dead. And about a mile west of Allinge, on a projecting rock, two lifeless forms were reclining locked in each other's arms: a maiden of passing loveliness and a stalwart, handsome youth. They were Gudrun, the clairvoyante, and Gunnar, the Hero and Leander of Bornholm.



#### TWILIGHT HOURS.

SOME calm, declining day that follows spring,  
When Nature rests, her Maker's praise to sing,  
While birds at vespers carol 'mid the trees,  
And flowers are cradled by the summer breeze,  
Where brooks with soft responses ripple by,  
And ev'ning's mirrored blushes grace the sky:

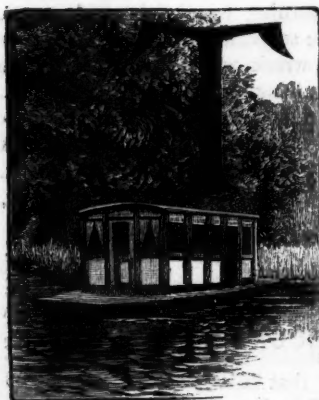
Such time as this, how great delight to stray  
From eager strife of busy haunts away,  
To tread with aimless, slow, forgetful feet  
Some world-forgotten, time-endear'd retreat:  
And muse where Thought on Mem'ry's pleasure stays,  
What passing shadows tell of coming days.

Here tinkling sounds that follow soft sheep-bell,  
Or cuckoo's lonely calls from distant dell  
Most eloquent, discourse of tranquil ease,  
And exercise a subtle charm to please:  
The soul, released from earth's confining care,  
Now lightly soars as eagles' wings will bear.

High up amid the everlasting throng,  
It joins the angels in their festal song,  
Eager to celebrate His praise and might,  
Whose sun-like splendour sheds celestial light,  
And clothes—precursor of eternal day—  
The night of doubt in morning's bright array!

W. F. J.

## IN A HOUSE-BOAT.



HE marriage occurred in the early spring, while Mr. Adolphus Carew still went through the daily amount of overwork from which we know our young men suffer in Government offices. The pretty bride preferred this to a hasty ramble on the Continent, and the wedded pair resolved to take a holiday in the summer instead of a honeymoon trip.

The fact was that Mrs. Adolphus was as busy and energetic in mind as she was pretty; and she desired at once to enter on the hard labour of providing home comforts and unimpeachable dinners for her newly acquired treasure—a husband. What wonder that to Adolphus life seemed only likely to be too short for the full appreciation of his happiness? To wave a tender farewell from the London street to the London window where a sweet bright face responds, every morning; to be braced for the red-tape agonies of the day by the remembrance that four o'clock *would* come at last; and that after two well spent hours of recreation following the severe mental strain, there would be a *recherché* and well-cooked meal to make life blissful: this was the enviable existence of my hero.

One evening in June—they were just going to the opera—Millicent heard the delightful plan that was to ensure a happy holiday.

"My darling, Brown—Higglesby-Brown, you know—has a house-boat moored in the upper Thames. He offers it to us for a month, from the 10th of July."

"*Delightful!*" cried the bride, beaming with smiles. "So peaceful! And we shall be *all alone*," she tenderly added.

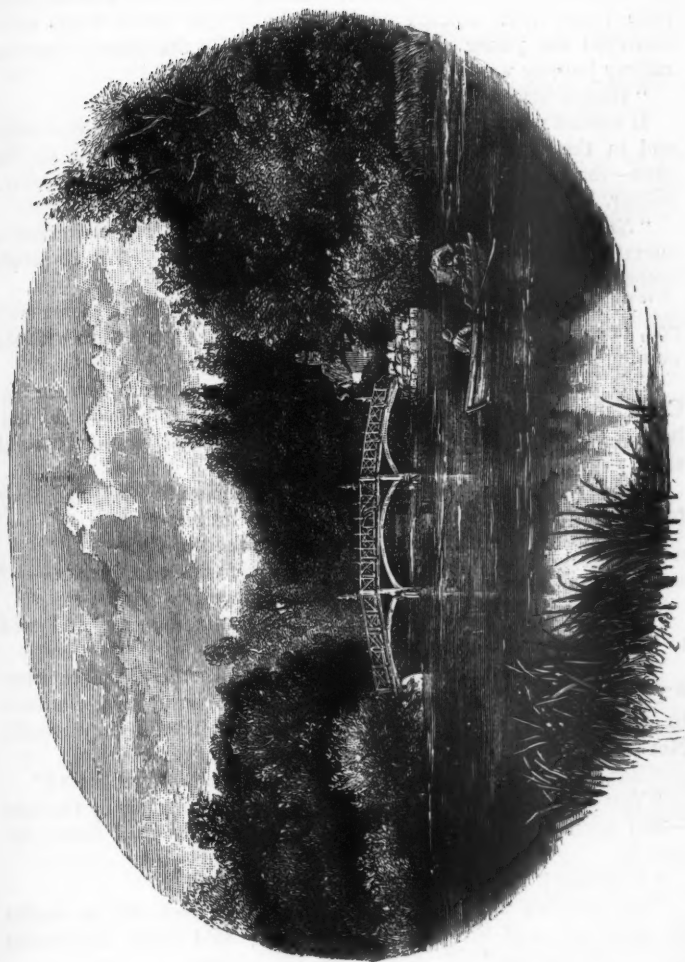
A silence sufficient to admit of an extremely wasteful prodigality of kisses ensued, and then he murmured:

"That is the charm of it! Here we are separated for hours; there we shall have each other. And, my darling, I feel it is our first chance of being totally dependent on each other for society."

Another blissful silence, broken this time by the servant's announcement that the cab was at the door.

Well, July arrived at last, and Millicent packed away her London





GOING TO MARKET.

dressess, and looked fondly on the simple semi-shepherdess costumes in which she was to delight the eyes of her husband for a month. In a small sailor hat with a red ribbon, a striped red-and-white flannel short skirt, a white flannel boating body, it was a most dainty little figure that entered enthusiastically the small boat which conveyed the young couple to their home on the waters, when the railway journey was over.

"How delicious!" cried Millicent; "let us explore!"

It needed not a long tour to inspect one salon, two tiny bedrooms, and in the stern a small cooking and sleeping apartment for the man—for Mr. Higglesby-Brown had left his attendant, a retired soldier.

"So convenient!" said the young lady. "No long staircases to mount, and everything within reach of your hand. Why *do* people bother so to live in large houses!"

"Perhaps in winter, Milly, they need them. But I agree with you, one could never tire of such a spot. Those superb trees with the evening light on them! That picturesque bridge!"

This happy condition of things was further increased when Mr. Crow, the servant, served a dainty cold dinner which had been bought at Whiteley's ready cooked; supplemented by potatoes and salad.

The day had been hot; the night was deliciously cool, and Milly rose with ardour prepared for housekeeping duties.

"When does the butcher call?" she enquired of Crow.

"There is no butcher, if you please, ma'am, within four miles——"

"No butcher! what do you do for meat then?"

"Mr. Higglesby-Brown, ma'am, *he* liked tinned meats, and used to have a box down every week."

"What's that? tinned meats!" exclaimed Adolphus, entering.

"Those horrid things they give us an article on every few months to show what excellent food the poor might have if they would! Not for me!"

"But, Adolphus, dear, what *shall* we do if we can't get meat?"

"You could scull the four miles—it's nigh six though, by the river—and fetch back some, sir, if you're so minded," said Crow, demurely.

"I daresay!"

"Oh, couldn't we, Adolphus? It would be such fun to market for ourselves—and bring home the basket," said Milly, brightening up. "Do take me."

How could he say no? So after a leisurely breakfast, in full sunshine, they started. Four miles down-stream is a very simple matter, especially to a young man who is beguiled by the pleasure of giving a first lesson in sculling to his pretty wife.

The village was reached, and some meat procured. There was no hotel, only a little inn, or what is better named a beer-shop. By this

time ominous clouds had come over, and a peal of thunder rolled slowly away in the distance.

"Pleasant, that!" muttered Adolphus. "We had better wait to see what weather is coming. It is twelve o'clock now."

What was coming, and came, was a desperate shower. They took refuge in a cottage, where the woman provided them with some bread and cheese—the only fare attainable.

Directly it cleared they started "home," the cushions uncomfortably damp, and their spirits becoming so, when the four miles full against stream was visited by two drenching showers.

Crow gravely condoled with them, recommended change of garments, and suggested hot whisky and water. Milly shook her head at the last, but promptly insisted on putting ready her husband's dry garments, and then changed her own dress.

When a meal had refreshed them, the advisability of writing at once for a store of provisions to prevent the recurrence of such a chance of famine was discussed and acted on: Crow being entrusted with a telegram to despatch from the nearest place.

Then a box of books was unpacked, and Adolphus read aloud on the house-boat, where they made a sweet addition to the Sylvan picture.

"Adolphus, this is happiness!" murmured Milly, fondly; and he did not gainsay her.

The next week set in wet. The first day of it Milly produced a piece of art needlework, and Adolphus devoted himself to committing to paper his views on the very great advantage these house-boats were to humanity. They had enough to eat, and did not suffer, though the saloon and cabins had a very damp and stuffy smell. The third day of rain found both husband and wife more silent, except that they twice contradicted each other. Then Milly complained of a headache, and wished that they could get out, and Adolphus barely commiserated the headache, and said wet weather was awfully slow except at a club.

On the fourth day a gentle melancholy clouded Milly's bright face, and her husband stood just without the saloon under an umbrella, glowering at the glorious woods. He turned his wearied eyes from the trees he knew so well, to the face he knew still better.

"Good Heavens!" mentally raved Adolphus, "if this goes on I shall become a brute! I shall hate the sight of the wife of my bosom!"

On went the rain. Crow punctually served the meals, but fresh meat was not attainable. Adolphus smoked a pipe after dinner, still under an umbrella, watching eagerly for the boat which he hoped would bring his box of necessary luxuries—rather a contradiction of terms, but not of facts.

In sight—and Adolphus rose, with the words "At last!" on his lips, but these were changed with a wild shout of joy to "A friend!"

and he rushed to the side to welcome with fervour a man he had invited to come "when he could." Robinson Crusoe could have felt scarcely less joy at sight of his fellow man.

"Ha, ha, ha!" laughed the jolly stranger, Tom Higgs, by name: "thought I'd get the best welcome this weather. Where is Mrs. Carew?"

"Here, Milly!" cried Adolphus, joyfully, and Milly appeared at the door of the saloon with the faint reflection in her face of a terrible doubt in her heart. Adolphus had been silent and depressed for days—he had tired of her. A stranger woke his interest and his joy where she had failed! Under the circumstances her greeting of the friend had not the warmth Adolphus had expected to see, though it lacked nothing in grace.

"How very kind of you to come this wretched weather, Mr. Higgs," she said, holding out her hand with a faint smile. "We are completely isolated! Has the box come?" she added to her husband, with something of sternness in her tone, forgetting as older wives sometimes do that pot-luck is all an unexpected guest can expect, and husbands are not *always* to blame for the chance of their arrival.

"No! By Jove, Tom, we are in a horrible plight! Nothing but tinned meat to offer you till our goods turn up!"

"Don't name it! Mrs. Carew, I'm a famous cook, and I'll teach you to make some good things out of these tins."

At another time Milly would have brightly accepted the offer. As it was she said she left everything to the man, and disappeared to give him his directions.

Adolphus Carew felt angry and uncomfortable, but his friend was really a bit of a philanthropist in his way, and having expected to find things just as they were, pretended to see nothing. But in the course of an evening smoke on the deck of the house-boat, enveloped in waterproof, Mr. Tom Higgs aired his sentiments slowly.

"Delightful theory"—puff—"this isolation. Does for bachelors"—puff—"who have knocked about"—puff—"and don't care for society"—puff—"but there ought to be more than"—puff—"a man and his wife!"

"Perhaps," said Adolphus, a little stiffly, for he was rather sore at what he actually found himself calling Milly's temper. "But when a fellow needs change and quiet, he ought to be able to get it in peace."

"Ah," said Tom, meditatively, filling his second pipe; "we're awfully hard on the girls we marry."

"How?" asked Adolphus, in amazement. "You never did marry; so what do you mean?"

"I mean this. We take a girl (*you* do, for instance—individually I *don't*) from a lot of brothers and sisters, and forget she's used to the society of anything but your precious self. When she's done all she can to be charming, you yawn over the weariness of things in

general. In a confoundedly small space like this you can't lose sight of her for ten minutes, nor she of you ; so if you get a spice of annoyance about you, you can't forget it."

"It has been horribly slow since this rain began," admitted Adolphus ; "but a man may make a mistake in his choice."

"So may a woman, bless you ! fifty mistakes ; and often does," exclaimed Higgs, vigorously. "Bless you, I say again, a man with one of the pleasantest faces and the most charming manner I know is a brute to his wife and children. Bah ! it's all chance." Clouds of smoke mingled with the small rain for a few seconds.

"Wouldn't you like some whisky and soda ?" demanded Adolphus.

"Shouldn't I, just !"

"I'll get some—or—or will you come in and have it ?"

"Not a bit of it. Fetch it up," said Higgs, heroically.

Adolphus found his wife with a closely-written letter, gradually progressing, and hot tears falling on it. That letter was to a favourite sister, recommending her never to marry. But it was torn up and the fragments floated on the Thames that night. Poor Mr. Higgs waited long for his whisky and water, smiling genially to himself. At last it was Milly's voice that begged him to come out of the horrid wet and take it in the cabin. He descended and saw that the weather below had changed from stormy to mild and unsettled.

"We're going to make a move, Higgs," said Adolphus, genially ; "this weather is killing, in a place like this. Brighton will be better—eh, Milly ?"

"Yes," said Milly, with a pretty tremble in her voice, and eyes that were still soft with tears. "Won't you come with us, Mr. Higgs ?"

"That I will, Mrs. Carew, and many thanks."

"And we'll make Crow a present of that box of provisions—if it ever turns up. Let's go to-morrow !"

"You're a prompt fellow, Carew. Now take my advice and never shut yourselves up with nothing to do. House-boats are splendid at Regattas and for large parties, but they are damp, uncomfortable holes that breed nothing but mischief when you get weather like this."

Milly's grateful smile thanked Mr. Higgs—and as she slid her hand into the one her husband had laid at her disposal under the table-cover, she said :

"I think the wet makes one get cross and fanciful, but I *don't* want to live in a house-boat again."

MINNIE DOUGLAS.

## A QUIXOTIC REQUITAL.

By E. M. DAVY.

I THOUGHT her the most beautiful woman in the world. I worshipped her with a passionate girlish adoration that can only be comprehended by those who have had a like experience to my own. How it came about that an intimacy should have sprung up between the fashionable Mrs. Dalyel of Dalyel Court, Warnshire—a French-woman by birth, but now the widow of a wealthy Englishman—and my small insignificant self, will be seen by the conversation which took place the morning after I arrived on a visit to her at Bath.

We were sitting in a private room of the Grand Hotel, overlooking the busy thoroughfare of Stall Street, and were watching with a melancholy interest the numerous Bath chairs with their sad-eyed occupants passing in endless succession to and fro. Contrasting the lot of these poor sufferers with my own, my heart overflowed at the thought of all Mrs. Dalyel had done for me, and turning to her I tried to express in a few broken words some of the gratitude I felt.

She silenced me at once.

"Dear Lucy," she said in her musical voice, with the slight touch of foreign accent which gave to her speaking such a charm: "dear Lucy, after all what is it that I have done? Why, truly nothing! You exaggerate the facts, my child. I was in London for the season, and, like others of my friends, I took the pottery craze, and joined a class at Powell and Storm's. You taught that class, and I took a wonderful liking to my charming little teacher. The other day a celebrated physician spoke to me extollingly of Bath. I decided at once to come here—as a preventive rather than a cure, for, thank heaven, my health is excellent. I came, but found it dull; oh, so dull. Then suddenly remembering that your holidays were now going on, I wrote inviting you to join me here. In short, I wanted you to amuse me, Lucy. You owe me no thanks for that."

"My poor father ——" I began.

"He was ill, blind, dying, when I knew you first. That accounted for your poor little white face and oft-times tearful eyes. You had to toil and slave to earn money, that he might not want for necessities. When I learned this, my heart bled for your trouble, and I—who had more money than I could spend upon myself—gave you some of it for him. I sent also a little fruit, a little wine, a doctor. Ah! I believe he was a little doctor too! Say, was it not so?"

"Dear Mrs. Dalyel, do you count it nothing that you made my father's last days happier, that you gave him what all my loving toil could not procure? My gratitude ——"



"Pshaw! Child, speak not of gratitude. It consists but in the name. It is the rarest ——"

"But mine ——" I protested.

"Ah, *yours* will doubtless bear fruit such as the world has never known. It will enable you to move mountains—to give up kingdoms for my sake."

"Why do you laugh?" I asked, much pained. "Since I can remember anything I have lived only for my father—and my art. From to-day I shall live for something more: to prove to you that there *is* such a thing as gratitude."

"Dear little enthusiast!" exclaimed Mrs. Dalyel, with a laugh. "Then be it so. Convert me to your belief as quickly as you will. But see how the morning passes. I must go and drink the water."

A few moments later we crossed the street and passed under the colonnade to the pump-room where Mrs. Dalyel took her glass of water from an attendant and sat down at one of the small tables within the cordon, signing to me to do the same.

Though everything was new to me, I glanced but carelessly about the room, at the well known statue of Beau Nash the King of Bath, at the anxious faces of the water drinkers. I sought for something else, and found it soon in the shape of a white board bearing in large black characters the words "To the Roman Baths," on which also was a hand with index finger pointing out the route. It was there I had promised to meet Horace, but what excuse could I frame for leaving Mrs. Dalyel? Happily none was needed, for at that moment she happened to look up, and her eyes following mine, she said:

"No need to sit here all the time with me, dear child. Go down and see the newly-discovered Roman Baths. I have seen them once; for me that was enough. In half an hour you can rejoin me here."

I thanked her with a somewhat guilty conscience, and left her lingeringly.

On passing out of the pump-room I found myself in a narrow passage with doors on either side. Presently I came to a small spiral staircase which brought me to a vaulted corridor hot with the fumes of baths; then, descending a steep wooden ladder I emerged suddenly into the open air on to the scene of the recent excavations.

The hot August sun poured down his intensest rays from a heaven unflecked by cloud. Around lay heaped, in picturesque confusion, frieze and capital and column. I glanced momentarily at the few persons inspecting the ruins, but all were strangers to me. I paused on the broad stone steps laid there by our mighty conquerors sixteen centuries before, and gazed down into the dark waters of the bath.

Presently a little pebble, so small it scarcely caused a ripple, was flung into the water close to me. Guessing it to be a signal, I turned instantly in the direction whence the pebble came and stepped out of the sunshine into the shadow of some vaulted masonry. There before an easel stood the "one man in the world to me." He drew

## *A Quixotic Requit.*

me to him in the shade, the large canvas on the easel forming a friendly screen before us. He looked into my eyes, and kissed my lips; and I—what wonder that my pulses throbbed, and that my heart beat high with happiness? My short life, hitherto so weighty with care, seemed bathed in sunshine now.

"I may tell Mrs. Dalyel our secret?" I asked Horace as we were about to part to meet again on the same spot next day.

"No, Lucy," he said, "not yet; but soon." And as his will was mine I agreed to keep the secret of my engagement yet a little longer.

Three days went by, three happy days; for each morning I met my lover at our chosen and apparently safe trysting place. But on the fourth, as we sat in our cool retreat, I saw to my inexpressible dismay the tall and graceful figure of Mrs. Dalyel crossing leisurely the open space before us.

Horace, whispering me to sit still, rose, altered quickly and dexterously the position of his easel—so that while it still served as a screen to me, he himself stood out in the sunshine—then took up his brush and palette and began to paint. Mrs. Dalyel saw him instantly, and I was struck with the look that came into her face on doing so. It was unmistakably one of recognition and of startled, glad surprise.

"Mr. Lorenzo!" she exclaimed, when she had come quite close to him. Horace raised his hat, but apparently did not see the outstretched hand.

"No doubt you are surprised to find me here, Mrs. Dalyel," he said. "I left Rome about a month since and came to London. I ran down here because ——" The pause he made appeared significant.

"You knew that I was in Bath? You came to seek me?"

Her voice was so soft and low, it thrilled me. What a revelation it contained. Scarcely breathing, I awaited his reply.

"Here is my excuse," he answered, evasively, calling attention to his work. "You see I am painting a picture of this place. I am building up these ruins as they may have been in the golden days of their glory, and peopling them with figures of the past."

"The past!" she echoed. "Oh, at seeing *you* again, I can think but of *one* past. The time, five years ago. The scene, Rome. The actors, you and myself. Have you quite forgotten, Lorenzo?"

"I have forgotten nothing," he answered, in the hardest, bitterest tones I ever heard; and he continued to paint vigorously, while Mrs. Dalyel, from beneath the shadow of her deep lace-bordered parasol watched him with a feverish look in her fine dark eyes.

"Since we parted, Mr. Lorenzo," she said, gently, "I have seen your name rise gradually to fame. Fortune has been kind to you, whilst I ——"

"Whilst you are as handsome as ever; as rich, and I trust as happy." She laughed, a little disdainfully, it seemed.

"You judge by appearances," she said. "To tell you the truth, I am most greatly changed."

"Not in my eyes, at least," he answered, in deep, concentrated tones that made me shiver and turn cold. Then she bent her proud head close to his—so close—and spoke rapidly a few words that I could not hear. But he drew back, and to all appearance irrelevantly asked: "You are not alone here, Mrs. Dalyel?"

"No. I have with me a little protégée; a young girl whom I have taken up."

"Another whim of the moment?" he asked, bitterly.

"What would you?" she returned, with a slight shrug and her most pronounced French manner. "We idle women who have no ties—we take what you English call 'a craze' for this or that——"

"When 'this or that' means man or woman, then I say the play is sometimes dangerous for the victim," he interrupted. "Perhaps I speak too feelingly. This is scarcely the place, nor is it yet time to enter on ——"

"Come to the hotel," she said, not allowing him to finish his sentence. "When may I expect you?"

For a moment he seemed to hesitate, then said in a firm, low voice: "It was my intention to call on you this evening. I will do so."

He went on painting. I saw a flash of triumph leap into her eyes. Then she bowed and turned away.

I rose from my dark corner, thinking to pass Horace unperceived. He had dropped his brush and stood gazing after Mrs. Dalyel, seemingly lost in thought—thought that was pleasurable, for he smiled.

"Don't run away like that, Lucy!" he cried, hurriedly catching at my dress as I brushed by. I dared not trust myself to speak, much less to remain, but shaking myself free from his detaining hand, I fled across the open space and up the wooden ladder, scared and breathless. There I turned, and looking down on the scene I had just quitted, saw the sunshine gilding the broken columns, glistening in the waters of the bath, and Horace standing where I had left him with a bright smile on his lips. I pressed my hands before my eyes to shut out the sight, and, shivering, made my way back to the hotel.

Too miserable, too mystified, to dare to meet Mrs. Dalyel at lunch, I made an excuse to remain in my own room, but on joining her later, was struck with the change in her. Her cheeks were flushed, her beautiful eyes beamed with a new light in them. She looked handsomer than I had ever seen her. And I—I watched her with a pain at my heart that was new and strange to me. When the wretched dinner was over—which one of us could not touch for happiness, the other for very misery—I was about to leave the room, but Mrs. Dalyel called me to her, bidding me be seated on a low stool at her feet, my hand close clasped in hers. She said: "Lucy, my liking for you is no idle whim. I love you dearly. As a proof of this I have something to tell you that concerns you very closely. But first of all I shall make a confession to you that regards myself. You love me, child?" she asked, leaning over me.

For sole reply, I pressed my lips upon the hand I held, while she continued :

"When quite young I married Mr. Dalyel. My parents arranged the marriage according to the approved French custom. Six years ago my husband died, leaving me a large fortune, the bulk of which, however, in the event of my making a second marriage, goes to his only relative : a man of whom I know nothing, except that he disgraced himself in my husband's eyes by going into trade. The first year of my widowhood over, I went to Rome. When there I took a craze for art, studied for several months under one of the first artists, and became acquainted with a young man named Lorenzo, also studying in the same studio. He was many years younger than myself ; very handsome, a charming companion, devoted to art, and very soon became equally—or perhaps rather more—devoted to me. Well, what would you ? I encouraged him—as a pastime, of course—but never for one moment believed he was sufficiently infatuated and presumptuous to ask me to marry him. He not only asked me to be his wife, however, but seemed astounded by my refusal. I laughed at him, ridiculing to scorn a proposal from a man so young, unknown, and above all penniless. We parted in bitterest anger ; for he was proud, high-spirited, passionate as myself. But as time went by, I found, too late, 'alas, that I loved this proud young artist, whom I had scorned in Rome—loved him with a love your girlish heart could not understand. I said 'too late ;' I thought so then ; but now, thank heaven, I have seen him once again. He is coming here to-night, and I will tell him ——" Bending over me once more, she kissed my forehead, speaking the last words in a whisper : "Can you guess, my child, what I will tell him ?"

"That—you love him ?"

"Yes !"

"But Mrs. Dalyel, forgive me, are you quite sure that he—that he still loves you ?" I asked, trembling, surprised at my presumption ; for, could anyone who had once loved her, fail to love her all his life ?

"Do you suppose, Lucy, that having once loved me —— ?"

Ha ! It was an answer to my thoughts. She broke off suddenly ; then continued in a different tone.

"After all, this is only leading, my child, to what I have to say. Your future, Lucy, is as interesting to me now as is my own. I have found a husband for you. The man to whom, if I marry again, my fortune goes is coming here. I have corresponded with him through my solicitor, and this letter, concerning the affair reached me to-day. I took it this morning to the Roman bath, to read to you, but we missed each other somehow, and since then other thoughts have filled my mind. He says : 'I am ready to marry your protégée as soon as she will have me, and will call upon you on the evening of the day you receive this letter.' It is short and to the point. He has plenty of strong, good sense, this dear stockbroker cousin, you may be sure !

My solicitor tells me he is not rich. Stockbroking has not flourished with him it seems. But with my fortune—mine that I shall forfeit to marry the man I love—you will make quite a grand match, my child. Stand up and let me look at you, little bride elect."

Mechanically, at her bidding, I stood up. What else was there for me but to obey?

"What a poor little trembling mouse it is! How white and scared you look. Oh, but you will be very happy with your stockbroker—far happier than painting pots and plates, my dear. He will be here to night—and my lover too."

I was still standing in front of her and she was looking at me with her beautiful eyes and smiling red lips. I tried to speak but knew not what to say. In my agony, my right hand clutched a little cord about my throat. So strong was the grasp, that the thread snapped suddenly, and a large medallion, till then concealed, fell to the ground at Mrs. Dalyel's feet. She saw at a glance it was a miniature of Horace, and looked at it closely as she took it in her hands, then from it to me.

"How came you by this?" she asked, in a tone in which pride was strangely mingled with surprise.

"Mrs. Dalyel, I painted it from memory."

"*You?* Is it possible you know Mr. Lorenzo? Why are you so slow in answering? Speak, Lucy."

"I knew him many years ago," I replied, in a voice I did not recognise as my own. "He lodged in our house. We were always poor, you know. He lodged with us in London before he went to Rome. I was a child then."

"But this is a picture of him as he is now. It is like, wonderfully like," she said, looking at it absently, then suddenly up at me. "But, child, child, why do you look like that? There is something more. Tell me, for heaven's sake tell me——" She caught my hands and held them so tightly that she hurt, while her eyes seemed to burn like fire into mine. "Tell me—what is this man—to you?"

"To me? To me?" I gasped, all the suppressed passion in me rising at her words: "Mrs. Dalyel, how can you suppose that he is anything to me? Have you not said he is—your lover?"

And snatching my hand away, I fled swiftly from the room.

On reaching my own little chamber I sat down at the toilet-table dazed and helpless. A long time must have passed for it was dark when someone knocked at my bed-room door. It was Mrs. Dalyel's maid.

"Will you please go to the sitting-room, Miss Vane," she said. And the next moment, without a pause for thought, I was turning the handle of that door.

The bright light dazzled me at first, but I was able to perceive that there were two persons in the room—Mrs. Dalyel and a gentleman. He had his face turned from me; he was partly hidden by the window-curtains.

Mrs. Dalyel rose. She was deadly pale ; her lips compressed and bloodless ; her head was thrown back proudly. She scarcely seemed to see me, but the look in her eyes was terrible.

"Lucy Vane," she said in a hard, set voice, out of which all the old music had departed : "I told you that I was interested in your welfare, and that, in accordance with the custom of my country, I was arranging a marriage for you. You are aware that my late husband's cousin is ready to marry you. He is here, and desires that I present him to you. Miss Vane—Mr. Horace Dalyel."

So saying, and drawing herself up to her full height, she swept proudly from the room.

Horace ! I started at the name, then raised my eyes to the man who, after she had pronounced his name—and not before—turned and came a few steps towards me. My heart gave a bound and then stood still at sight of him.

"Ah, what a charming little comedy this has been !" he exclaimed, laughing, as he came forward eagerly with outstretched hands ; but I clasped mine behind me and drew back.

"Lucy, won't you speak to me till I explain ? Well, then, my darling, sit down here while I tell you my story as short as I can make it, for I want to see you your own dear, smiling self again."

I sank mechanically into the chair he placed for me, and he continued :

"You know when I lodged with you that I was bent upon being an artist, but I did not tell you my real name, or that my cousin—many years my senior, and my guardian—did all he could to dissuade me from my intention. I determined to be the master of my own destiny, however, and, without informing anyone except your father, I went to Rome and studied there under the name you know me by—Lorenzo. In order to enjoy my freedom to the fullest and to 'snap all links of habit,' I gave out that I had gone upon the Stock Exchange. It was a happy thought, for by that means I completely ostracised myself from my cousin and his set."

He paused a moment, then went on more rapidly :

"In Rome, many years afterwards, by a strange fatality, I encountered my cousin's widow, and—I do not deny—fell desperately in love with her. She gave me every encouragement, and it did not appear to me presumptuous to believe her passion real, knowing as I did, that according to my cousin's will, if she married again, the bulk of her fortune would be mine. But she behaved infamously ; refused me with the utmost arrogance, calling me adventurer, fortune hunter, I know not what ; little thinking that a marriage with me was the sole way to *keep* her wealth, instead of forfeiting it. You may be sure I did not enlighten her on the point ; but I swore to be revenged. A rare opportunity presented itself on discovering *you* to be her protégée. Another, still more unique, occurred when, a few days since, she wrote to her lawyer to negotiate a marriage between the poor,



despised, plebeian stockbroker cousin and her dear protégée, Lucy Vane. The letter was forwarded to me here and I made a draft of the answer to be copied by the lawyer's clerk and re-enclosed to Mrs. Dalyel.

"Lucy, the little comedy is ended. The dénouement came about most satisfactorily, and behold me, your true lover, here by Madame, my cousin's orders to make love to you!"

He laughed out merrily, but stopping suddenly: "you scarcely seem to——understand?" he questioned, in an altered tone.

"You—you expect me to enjoy 'the little comedy'?" I asked with a half sob, which I in vain tried to suppress.

"Why not?" and he sought to take my hand.

"Because to me it is more tragedy than comedy," I answered, striving to brace every nerve to calmness, and succeeding to all outward show.

"We view the matter through different lights, it appears, Lucy. And it is hard—just a little hard on me, I think, to take it as you do. You are so utterly unlike your old dear self—is it Mrs. Dalyel's baneful influence? You know I strongly objected to this visit, but you were perfectly infatuated with the woman——"

"Mr. Dalyel, I must leave you. All is at an end between us," I said, getting up and going towards the door.

"But, Lucy, my own darling, this is simply madness! Whatever has come over you? You surely are satisfied that I do not love that woman?"

"I cannot argue. But I have my own reasons for assuring you that from now we must be strangers. Nothing that you can say will alter this determination. Please let me pass."

"Then you have no right to keep these reasons to yourself. It is the barest justice that you tell me what they are."

Oh, how could I? How could I, since he did not know, or sought to conceal from me, the fact that Mrs. Dalyel loved him?

"Mrs. Dalyel is so beautiful, so good——" I stammered.

"But my dearest girl, when I tell you my heart is yours, and that I do not love Mrs. Dalyel!" A ray of light shone on the difficulty.

"Are you quite sure that I—love you?" I asked, crimsoning at the bare thought of the untruth I was about to act.

"Lucy, if you, laying your hand in mine, and looking at me with your truthful eyes, can say: 'Horace, I do not love you,' I will believe you, and will give you up. Not otherwise, I swear."

"Then heaven pardon me, for you drive me to it," I exclaimed, in desperation. "Horace, I do not love you." I neither laid my hand in his, nor looked at him. I said the words clearly and firmly that were to part us for ever, and before he had recovered from his consternation, I had fled from the room. The ordeal was over.

My sacrifice was made.

Mrs. Dalyel I did not see again until next morning. I was dressed ready for departure, my portmanteau on a cab before the door.

"Mrs. Dalyel," I said, falteringly, "I have come to wish you good-bye."

She turned and looked at me, her face cold and stern as it had been the night before. There was a scornful smile on her beautiful red lip.

"Where are you going?" she asked, coldly.

"To my old life. To the home in which you found me; and I shall have all I want—all that is good for me," I corrected, hurriedly.

"Go, then."

"Yes. But I cannot go like this." Her coldness cut me to the heart. "Will you not kiss me first? I have loved you so!"

"I would as soon kiss an adder," she cried, her eyes blazing with anger. "Go, go; never let me see or hear of you again."

With a choking sensation in my throat I turned away. Pulling down my veil, I left the hotel and started on my sad and solitary journey back to town.

How dreary looked my two small rooms in the dull, narrow street of Kensington, despite the warm welcome of the kind, motherly woman with whom I lodged!

But I was determined not to repine. I must accept my life as it was and make the best of it. Besides, had I not still my art? So I set about putting my little studio in order, taking from where I had stowed them, my bits of china, my tapestry, my specimens of painted glass. This done, I sat myself down to paint a plaque. But alas, my hand seemed to have lost its cunning, my eyes their sense of colour. Ah, how I have laughed since at the sorry sight that unlucky plaque presents, for I continued to paint at it long after it was too dark to see. And then—and then, I suppose I dropped asleep.

"Thank heaven, you are awake at last!" a well-known, much loved voice exclaimed.

I had lifted my head from the table on which it had been resting, rubbed my eyes, and began to look about me. The gas was lighted. Was it a dream that Horace stood before me?

"I followed you from Bath by the next train," he went on, excitedly. "And now tell me, Lucy, tell me that you did *not* mean what you said to me last night."

"I *did* mean it. I can never, never marry you," I answered, recovering myself. I knew now it was no dream; but that Horace was really there demanding—as he undoubtedly had the right to do—an explanation of my conduct.

"Why cannot you marry me?"

"Because——" Oh, how could I explain?

"I *know* you love me, Lucy."

"This is cruel, wicked of you!" I cried, turning away my face.

"And loving me—knowing also that I love you—it is cruel, wicked of *you*," he continued, using my own words, "to doom us both to misery for no reason that I can understand. If you persist in refusing to have anything to say to me, pray who will be the gainer?"

"Mrs. Dalyel."

"Great heavens, child! Do you imagine that she is at last in love with me? I confess I had not thought of that!"

"Then do think of it, Horace. You have met again. It is—it *is*—quite possible."

"This is indeed too rich a joke. What then?"

"She has been so good to me—so good! It would be such base ingratitude ——"

"Ah, now I begin to see! You would sacrifice your happiness to a Quixotic fancy. But in that case, Lucy, you should take care to be the only sufferer. You have no right to spoil my life too."

"But would it spoil yours? Suppose she loved you and was ready to marry you to-morrow?"

"I would not have her if there were not another woman in the world! I love you, Lucy, and you only. Come, sweetheart, put all these far-fetched ideas of gratitude aside. Unsay the cruel words you spoke last night. Tell me that——" He paused; we stood close together now. He caught my hand and pressed it unhindered to his lips.

"I love you, Horace," I whispered, "and decided wrongly. Oh, can you ever forgive me?"

He did forgive me; but Mrs. Dalyel did not. I have never seen her since that—to me—most wretched day at Bath.

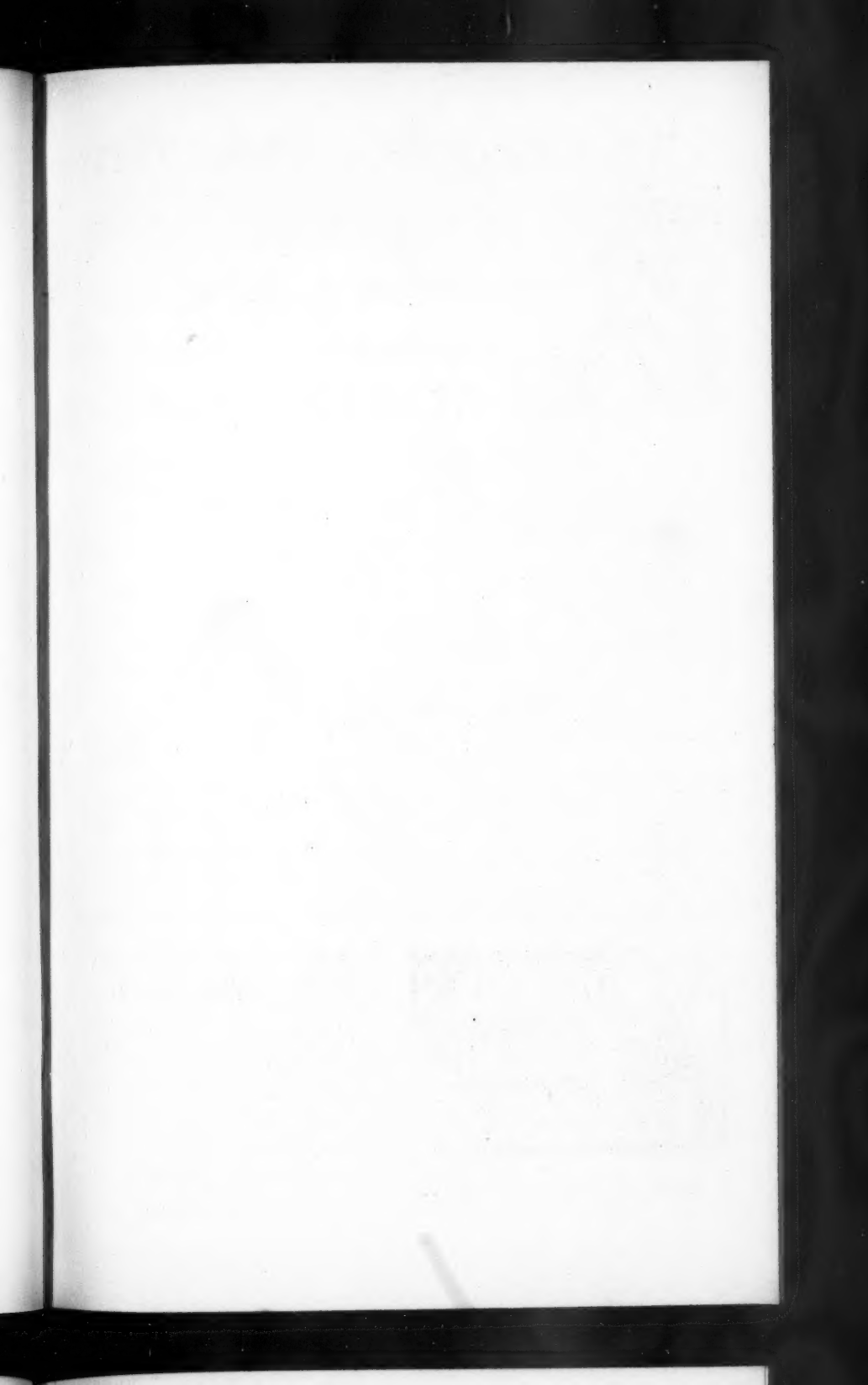
She has a new "craze" now, I hear, and I am glad of it, because I believe if she has that she is happy. Dressed in sable garments, covered by a long dark cloak, she goes at night to visit amongst the London poor, there, with a generous hand, ministering to their needs. They look upon her as an angel of mercy, and her name is blessed by the miserable and the afflicted. Am I then right in calling it "a craze?" Is it not rather that her heart has softened, and that what must have been a real trouble to her has opened it to Paradise?

I have married Horace, and am happier than I had thought it possible to be here below. I realise now how wrong I should have been had I given him up for ever, and so spoilt and, perhaps, wrecked two human lives. I have never seen Mrs. Dalyel since that fatal day at Bath, but something whispers to me that the hour is not far distant when we shall meet once more and she will restore to me all the affection so freely lavished upon me in the days gone by.

## OUT OF THE CURRENT.

SMALL claim upon the world have I,  
 For life long since has passed me by,  
 I scarce know when, I scarce care why.  
 The years have grown on me apace—  
 Old friends look sharply in my face,  
 Some more remembered look to trace.  
 An idle, lonely life I lead,  
 I read and smoke—and smoke and read—  
 Books and a pipe, man's chiefest need !  
 My room's old-fashioned, like myself,  
 Hung round with plates of curious delf,  
 Book-panelling on every shelf.  
 An old Sir Joshua beauty fair,  
 A print or two, a quaint arm-chair,  
 Two furry friends the rug to share.  
 Not much of this world's goods to own—  
 Enough for one who lives alone,  
 Whose friends and youth alike are flown.  
 Sometimes in dreamy reverie—  
 My old young-self comes back to me,  
 And all the things that used to be.  
 Old thoughts, old hopes, then fresh and new,  
 Old fancies that I once thought true,  
 When life was fair and skies were blue.  
 The old home, with its childhood joys,  
 Whose grey walls rang with healthful noise,  
 The merry shouts of girls and boys :  
 My father's words of counsel wise,  
 The love-light in my mother's eyes—  
 Ah me ! how fast the memories rise.  
 My college-friendship, made for life ;  
 We parted scornful and at strife—  
 Now I've my books, and he his wife !  
 Then wondrous plans, Utopian schemes,  
 Those pleasant ink-and-paper dreams  
 That look so well—I've written reams.  
 That sweet face smiling at my side  
 I swore to guard with life-long pride—  
 Well ! Heaven took her ere I tried.  
 Then work that went against the grain,  
 And money coming just in vain,  
 For shattered health and worn-out brain.  
 All dead ! all gone ! a tale that's told,  
 The hot quick blood of youth is cold,  
 And I myself am growing old.  
 I care not when the end may be,  
 Few here will miss my company,  
 There some are looking out for me.  
 One above all will watch, I know—  
 Ah, Love ! this world lost all its glow  
 When you were taken—long ago.

CHRISTIAN BURKE.





M. L. GOW

J. SWAIN.

"AT LAST!"